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JMJ

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St. Agnes,

Each year as summer arrives in the parish there is a blessed lull in activity as various ministries take a break and many families travel here and there visiting relatives and friends or enjoying a nice vacation. That lull has been lacking for us this year. In fact, it seems as if we've kicked things into high gear! There has been a great deal going on around our campus, and I want to update you on it.

To begin, thank you to all who have taken the time to give feedback via the Master Planning survey. The goal of the Master Planning Committee (MPC) is to determine how our facilities are being used, the needs of those who make use of them, and to form a plan on how best to utilize them in the future. Your responses have been invaluable in shaping the MPC's discussions and charting a clear course forward. From the feedback of over 130 individuals, I was personally encouraged to see the high importance placed upon service to the poor, spiritual formation, and community-building events. The MPC also saw in the results a few items that were more frequently commented upon and emphasized: the need for more parking, a desire for increased stalls in the church restrooms, the continued beautification of our facilities and grounds, and the need for an indoor gathering space. Taking the survey results into account, together with feedback from the parish ministries, apostolates, groups, and staff, the MPC held a lengthy discussion and agreed upon several proposals.

One: that the Building Committee look into the expansion of the church restrooms. While there are many factors to take into account here, it is something often remarked upon and needing to be addressed.

Two: that the parish office be relocated to the first floor of the PSR building. While some may not consider this a high priority, I see it as a vital element to parish life. The current office in the rectory is a limited space, and we presently have staff working in offices in three separate buildings. Bringing everyone under one roof will benefit the daily operation of the parish. Additionally, the office will be more centrally located and easily accessed. Almost daily our staff receive phone calls from guests and delivery men walking around the campus trying to find the office. Lastly, moving the office out of the rectory will allow the priests in residence a healthy separation between work and home.

This move, of course, will change the use of the PSR building. The PSR classes can all be accommodated on the second floor. The first floor meeting room at the end of the hall near restrooms will remain available for groups to use. Hearing the pleas for a quieter atmosphere and a more accessible location for the adoration chapel, the MPC proposed its temporary move to the Msgr. Gillespie Chapel (located through the door next to the Sacred Heart mosaic) and its eventual move to the renovated cafeteria building. That final location will allow greater accessibility and quiet, closer bathroom facilities, and possibly increased availability outside the chapel's regular hours. By the time you read this letter, the chapel will in fact have been moved to its new temporary location. Entrance during the regular chapel hours is through the back door at the rear of the church, just past the air conditioning units. I know there is a fondness for the adoration chapel being where the Dominican Sisters' convent chapel used to be, but the MPC and I believe that this long-term plan will serve our parish very well.

Three: that the Building Committee proceed with securing an architectural plan for a renovated layout of the cafeteria. While the layout is not firm, the MPC agreed upon inclusion of increased

restroom facilities, a smaller but still functional kitchen, the adoration chapel, a meeting room, storage, and a main gathering space slightly larger than the previous space. The Building Committee will meet in the coming weeks to review the MPC's proposal and begin working with an architect. There are still insurance issues being worked out with the cafeteria explosion, but your input and the recommendation of the MPC allows us to move forward with confidence that the updated layout will serve us well for years to come.

There are other items on the docket for the August MPC meeting, most notably that of parking and the use of the gym. Those issues will require much more financial planning, but it is the intention of the MPC to provide to parishioners a Master Plan for our parish for the next decade. It may be more than a decade before some plans come to fruition, but we must lay the plans now if we desire a future different than our current facilities situation.

A final note about the MPC survey. Some may have been concerned about the question on condensing the Sunday Mass schedule. That question was included to gather your initial feedback on the topic. We are NOT cutting a Mass or seriously considering a change at present. That said, there are benefits that could be found in going to such a schedule: the possibility of confessions on Sunday, a more close-knit community, opportunities for whole-parish catechesis or communal gatherings, and a more relaxed pace. To this I also add the fact that the number of priests is declining and the demands placed upon us continue to increase. Two of our neighboring parishes, Christ the King and Sacred Heart, lost their associate pastors this summer and are now one-priest-parishes. Condensing Sunday Masses is a conversation that will eventually be had in most parishes in our diocese, whether we like it or not, and the survey seemed a good opportunity to get feedback to pre-plan for our future here at St. Agnes.

There is much work to be done, but the Lord has been gracious in opening doors before us and allowing us to follow Him with confidence. *Deus providebit!* God will provide! I pray you have that same confidence in Him and feel the same sense of hope for our community here at St. Agnes. Know of my daily prayers for each of you, and please pray for me and for our parish. God bless you all!

Our Lady of Prompt Succor, hasten to help us! St. Joseph, pray for us! St. Agnes, pray for us!

in Corde Jesu, per Mariam,

Fr. Brent Maher

July 13, 2023  
Feast of St. Henry