

## **Talk in church by Father Dave 2010 March 13/14**

Our parish executive committee on behalf of our parish, made an "Offer to purchase" for two lots near BH site. The location of the lots is north of the house across the street from the parking lot of the church on Ward Street. We have very little land in Baileys Harbor. Land attached to church property is rarely available when it is needed so when this piece of property became available we had to jump at it.

These lots would be possible extra parking for the future because there is not much property at this site. They could also possibly be part of the long term and big picture for our parish and its future. If we are truly planning for the future and open to the Holy Spirit, we have to leave open all of the possibilities. These lots would be sold if there is no possibility of using them because we do not want to continue to pay property tax on them.

We pay \$1,600 worth of property tax each year on our vacant property at the intersection of County's A and F even though we were told that that would not be the case. We do not need to add to those costs needlessly. As I mentioned in the bulletin this week, our councils are beginning to look at planning for our parish's long term buildings and grounds needs again. Our pastoral council struggled with this issue at its last meeting again.

The problem with our leadership and parish as a whole is that it is difficult for all of us to move beyond our own personal interests and discern in the Holy Spirit where Jesus Christ is leading us in God's love.

Certain people and groups said at that meeting as they have told me for years that either this issue has already been decided or that there is only one alternative and that they are the ones who know what it is.

First, if there was a solution that the whole parish had embraced in the past, it would have been implemented. Second, no individual person or group is going to dictate what the whole parish is going to do while I am pastor of Stella Maris.

Anyone who knows me personally or as pastor knows that I do not allow any one person or group to dictate what is best for the parish or what our parish policy or practice should be. I am as fair as I possibly can be for all.

First, I am loyal to Jesus Christ and what he asked us to do in the scriptures under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Second, I am obedient as much as possible to my earthly superiors who are the pope and the bishop in their laws, rules and regulations.

Third, I am a seeker of consensus within the parish. I am not foolish to believe that I will ever please everyone in the parish or even 90% of the people all of the time but I do believe that I can find a solution that the vast majority of our people can live with.

There is no priest that I know of who is more consultative of parishioners with surveys and votes, more collaborative with staff and parish leadership as well as consensus seeking of all involved in any decision but there comes a point when a decision has to be made. Within my competence and authority as pastor, I make those decisions in the best interests of the parish as I have been able to determine them. I ask everyone to work with me, trust me and help me to continue to move our parish forward in ministry and service of the gospel but also in achieving the best possible situation with regard to our buildings and grounds so that we do not quibble with each other over our own personal interests but find a way to work together toward a solution which serves the best interests of our parish and in the process glorifies God the best way that we can in Northern Door County.

Although the vote that we took a few years ago ruled out a new church building in the future, there is still talk that central offices, classrooms & meeting rooms would be helpful as well as a hall. If changing the status quo and moving toward that future is something that we all feel is a good idea, our options are limited for those scenarios. The site on A & F is possible but is controversial to begin with and would only add another set of buildings to the many sets we already have. The other two central sites are Baileys Harbor and Fish Creek. We are researching the possibilities with those sites which would use one of them for all of our central building space. I have already mentioned to our leadership a possibility which would be the least costly and drastic. The present rectory could be converted into offices, meeting rooms and classrooms.

We could acquire or build a new house for the priest. The Fish Creek church could be converted into a multi-purpose worship and hall site with a better kitchen added on.

If we choose to do nothing and keep everything the way that we have it, we would have to improve our Sister Bay kitchen and make a few other modest adjustments while figuring out what needs to be done with the present parish office building and making the most of everything else that we have. We would also have left our options totally open for the future, especially if the priest shortage does become very bad.

After considering all that I have said today, after praying about this situation yourselves personally, please

write down any thoughts that come to you from God and communicate them to me, the parish staff or any member of the pastoral or finance councils.

With prayer and God's help, we will move forward in the best way possible.

Thank you.

### **Addendum 1: Offer to Purchase**

I am sure that everyone is aware of the fact that an offer to purchase does not mean that the land has been purchased. It just means that we have the right to purchase it if the conditions in the offer to purchase are met. The closing date for the property is May 14<sup>th</sup> if these conditions are met.

A survey of the property.

Rezoning for parking

Approval of both the pastoral and finance council.

With purchases under \$100,000, diocesan approval is not necessary.

We have offered \$97,000 because there was an unofficial offer of \$50,000 for the smaller of the two lots.

We will be conducting an environmental study to make sure that there are no problems with the land.

The councils will use the best information that we have both before and after all of our studies to decide whether we go forward with this purchase or not.

### **Addendum 2: Planning options**

There are options at both the Baileys Harbor and Fish Creek sites if we decide that we need a central hall, office building, and meeting and class rooms. If we use the Baileys Harbor site, the rectory could become offices and meeting rooms, the present hall could become classrooms and a hall could be built in the parking lot. If we choose the Fish Creek site, we could simply add on classrooms, meeting rooms and offices and use the present church as a multi purpose building (church and hall) with a new kitchen added on. We could also build a new hall, etc. There are other considerations with each site. I am sure that there are other options as well but these are the ones that I have thought of.

There are advantages to keeping our building situation the way that it is. There would be the least amount of cost involved. We would also continue to have staff presence at more than one place. It is advantageous to have staff at both the north and south end with the priest living in the middle. When something comes up at these sites, it is easy to have someone there. It actually helps make people feel the presence of the leadership.

The advantages of everything being central were already listed in the future committee report and can be made available.

### **Addendum 3: costs for new building, repairs & implications**

It has been estimated that a new hall would cost somewhere in the neighborhood of 3 million dollars if we do everything and less if we only do parts. That would mean that we would have to do a fund drive. The diocese requires that we raise  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the money in cash and pledges before we begin doing anything. There would also have to be planning time before we raise the money. I have attempted this project before and know how difficult it can be. We would have to have a lot of will as a parish to enter into this present situation.

We do have some significant savings but they are being used up with maintaining our present buildings. A few years ago, we did a major fix to the roof in Fish Creek which was falling apart. A furnace has been replaced in Sister Bay and many more will have to be replaced in the coming years. We repaired the wall in Baileys Harbor which was falling in. The roof in Baileys Harbor needs to be replaced which will cost more than \$100,000 probably. The Egg Harbor Church needs repairs to the bell tower which will cost 10s of thousands of dollars. We will maintain our building well but they will eventually use up the savings that we have. We will eventually have to raise money for what we have to fix in those buildings when the savings is used up.

I will not compromise our parish ministry but will attempt to balance our operating expense budget as much as possible going forward. We will make the most of what God has given us to do God's work.