

# What's the Latest?

A Publication of the Catholic Community of Sellersburg

Volume 1, Issue 1

June 2014

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the "What's the Latest?" newsletter.

This newsletter is being written to keep you, the Catholic Community of Sellersburg, informed on what is happening with the consolidation of our two parishes into one. The newsletter will be published every other month. It will be emailed to those of you for whom we have email addresses and will be "snail mailed" to the rest! It is our hope that this newsletter will help keep you informed about all of the vital information about the merging together of our two parishes.

In this first issue, we would like to review how we got to this point.

In 2004, the Archdiocesan Planning Commission announced that at some point in the near future, St. Joe Hill and St. Paul would share a pastor.

In an effort to be proactive, the parish councils at that time formed a committee to look at how that might work in the Sellersburg Catholic Community. In time, a plan called Vision 20/20 was suggested. This plan called for there to be one parish, in one location, with a K-8 elementary school, by sometime

around the year 2020. This plan was adopted by both parish councils, ratified by both pastors and sent to Archbishop Daniel in 2009. Archbishop Daniel approved the plan that same year.

In 2009, both parishes entered into an agreement to purchase about 30 acres of land adjacent to St. Joe Hill Parish as a **possible** site for the new parish community. A down payment of 10% of the total purchase price was made with the option to complete the purchase needed by November of 2014.

In 2013, Fr. Tom Clegg was named pastor of both parishes. The Mass schedule was reworked to accommodate one priest presiding at all the Masses beginning in July of that year.

In January of 2014, the parish councils authorized a survey to get a feel for where people were with the possibility of merging the parishes into one at this time. 74.8% of those returning the survey said they were ready to move in that direction.

In February of 2014, a joint parish assembly was held. 78% of those attending the assembly stated that they too were ready to move in that direction.

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# Frequently Asked Questions

By Fr. Tom Clegg

A Note from Fr. Tom: In each issue of "What's the Latest," I will write a column called "Frequently Asked Questions." These will be questions I have heard. I believe the question one person asks is often shared by others.

## Q. Where does everything stand right now?

As I announced after the parish assembly in February, right now we have made the decision that the two parishes, St. Joe Hill and St. Paul, would become one parish. This was supported by 78% of those attending the assembly as well as 75% of those returning the surveys.

Both parish councils approved the motion to become one parish. I ratified the decision and sent the request to Archbishop Tobin. He approved our request in April.

We have formed a Long Range Planning Team that will lead our parishes through the process of merging into one parish. It will be their task to lead this process from right now until we are completely merged. They will begin meeting monthly and hope to publish this newsletter every other month to keep everyone informed of all that is happening.

## Q. So are we one parish right now or are we still two parishes?

Right now, we are still two parishes. The Archbishop has requested that we choose three possible names for our merged parish. He will choose the new name for our parish from those three names. He has also asked us to give him the date we would like to be recognized as the new parish. He would then issue the decree establishing the new parish and closing the existing parishes.

## Q. Will the parishioners be involved in selecting the name for the parish?

The short answer is yes. At some mass in the near future, I will give a homily about the importance of names. I will also examine what regulations the Church (and our bishop) have established regarding the name of a parish.

At that Mass each parishioner will be given a sheet of paper and they will be able to submit the name that they think the new parish should be called. We will collect those names and will tabulate the results. From that list we will submit somewhere between 10-20 names to all of our parishioners for a vote. The top three from that vote will be the three that we submit to Archbishop Tobin. We will also submit to him at that time a proposed "founding" date for the new parish.

## Q. How soon might this new founding date be?

I would think we are looking at sometime this fall or winter. If the name we choose is a saint's name, we may look to be founded near their feast day. If not, we will choose a date that allows us enough time to com-

bine organizations, commissions, etc.

## Q. It seems to me that all of this is moving too fast. Why are we doing this so quickly?

I guess that depends on how you look at it. The plan for our two parishes to merge into one parish was actually adopted back in 2009. It was approved by both parish councils at that time and ratified by Archbishop Daniel. However, nothing really happened with the proposal until I was named pastor of both parishes last July.

After I was named pastor, I said that I would not move forward with the consolidation process until after I had been here six months.

In January, 2014, I sent a survey out to all parishioners asking, among other things, "Are you ready to move forward with the Vision 20/20 plan of consolidating into one parish at this time?" When 75% said that they were ready to move forward, I felt that it was time to do so. However, I wanted to confirm that number through a parish assembly. When that number was confirmed, I felt there would be no benefit to waiting. Our parish councils agreed and the vote to move into one parish was made at our February meetings.

I know it seems quick because so much has taken place recently, but considering the process began in 2009 it has not been all that quick.

What I think this questions also speaks to is the sense of loss that comes with any change. Whenever we know something will be different there is a grieving that takes place with what is being lost. I understand those feelings and encourage all of us to be prayerful as we move forward, asking God to help show us His will and the grace to follow it, even when it is difficult.

## Q. Will we build a new Church or will we use one of our existing Churches?

No decision has been made regarding our worship space (church). In time, we will explore all possibilities. We will look at our space needs for the new parish: offices, meeting rooms, school, church, etc. regarding our worship space, we will look at costs/feasibility of expanding our existing Churches as well as building new. I would imagine the bishop will ask us for a Church to seat somewhere between 750 and 900. Our current capacities are 330 at St. Joe Hill and 425 at St. Paul, so we will be looking to at least double the size of the Church. I'm not sure if that is possible or not, but we will study it. There will be other assemblies as time goes on and you will always have input into the decision making process.

**Q. Why, if we are two viable parishes, is this merger needed?**

I think this is a great question. We are two viable parishes. But I am convinced that we can do more together than we can do alone. I think we will become an even greater parish when we put all of our resources (people, energy, financial, personnel) together. I think there is more that can be done with one parish of 1000 families than 2 parishes of 500 families.

One of the things that concerned me when we looked at the demographics of the last 10 years is that while the three townships that comprise our parish boundaries grew by 60%, our combined parish membership remained about the same. It makes me wonder why new Catholics moving into our area are choosing not to become members of our faith community. I think together we can better address that issue.

I also think that by reducing redundancies of time and energy (those tasks both parishes have to do) we will free up time to do several things: reach out to those in our parishes who need attention; reach out to those beyond our parishes that need attention; form solid structures that allow the parish to achieve all that it can achieve; and finally, I think it will allow us to show the world that two Churches can work together and become one to better build up the body of Christ.

**Q. Where will the money come to pay for all this?**

There is an old joke where the pastor says, "I've got good news and I've got bad news. The good news is that we have all the money we need to build our new Church! The bad news is that it's in your pockets."

I have said before that I firmly believe that if we are prayerful in all of our decision making, God will ensure that we have the resources to complete each project we start.

I can speak from some experience with this. In my parish in Indianapolis, there were lots of questions about whether or not we could raise the money necessary to build our new parish Church. We were able to do so and were able to pay off the new Church 6 years ahead of schedule (we paid off our ten year loan in four years). At Sacred Heart in Jeffersonville, we were able to do over \$1.4 million dollars in renovations without touching our savings and without borrowing money.

The bottom line for me is that if God wants this to happen, it will happen.

**Q. We've been called upon to build many things (for example: St. Paul's Parish, St. Paul renova-**

**tion, expand the school, build the parish hall at St. Joe, contribute to the Legacy of Hope, and the land acquisition.) We don't feel we can (or should be asked) to do any more.**

I've once heard it said, "The Christian life...all it is is give, give, give!" And that is true in so many ways. The Church, from the very beginning of time, has asked her members to invest in its mission. We will do so again and again. We build buildings to further our mission. We build them most often not for ourselves, but for generations to come. I think that is our vision as we embark upon this journey.

Your ancestors at St. Joe Hill and St. Paul (and some of you yourselves at St. Paul) built facilities that were needed to meet the needs of the Catholic Community at that time. Our needs change over time and we have needs now that weren't imagined in 1881 or 1947.

All of us have been involved in more capital campaigns than we care to remember. All I can ask of you is that when the time comes, you enter into it prayerfully, asking the question, "God, what do you want of me in this campaign?" If you ask that question in good faith, God will answer according to His desire in your life. And if we ALL do that, we will be okay!

**Q. Fr. Tom only had the parish vote so that we would pay for it later.**

I think we need to remember that the decision was made long before I arrived. What I discovered is that the decisions were made by the parish councils but the parishioners themselves were never fully consulted (by survey or assembly.) I did the survey and had the assembly because I wanted to see where people were, what people were thinking and feeling. I don't believe decisions like this should be made from the top down. I can't stop people from believing what they believe or feeling what they feel. All I can do is to be honest with you about what we are doing and why and how we are doing it. That's what I have done, and that is what I will continue to do.

***More Q and A on Back Page***

**If you have a question you would like answered here, please send it to Fr. Tom Clegg. You can mail it to either parish office or drop it in the collection basket to Fr. Tom's attention. You can also email them to me at [t.clegg@twc.com](mailto:t.clegg@twc.com). I would ask that you sign the question. I will not publish the names in the article, but it will be helpful to me so that I can address you personally if need be.**

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<b>2605 St. Joe Road West</b>	<b>216 Schellers Ave.</b>
<b>Sellersburg IN 47172.</b>	<b>Sellersburg, IN 47172</b>

# Questions and Answers

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**Q. I'm hearing that we may not build on the land that we are buying next to St. Joe. I thought when I gave money to purchase the land that it was for a new Church. Has any decision been made?**

No decision has been made yet with regard to where the new parish will be located. The Long Range Planning Team, the pastoral team, and the parish council, and all of you will have input into that decision.

I don't know for sure what was told to whom about the purchase of the land. I was told by both parish councils, however, that they understood that the land would be purchased as a **possible** site for a new Church. From the beginning I have said that we need to look at all the options available which include the St. Joe Hill Campus, the St. Paul Campus and other possible sites in our parish boundaries.

When we get to the feasibility study portion of the process we will look at all possibilities, present them to the parishioners, gather input, and make the best

decision we can make once we have all the information.

**Q. If no decision has been made as to where the new parish will be located, then why are we purchasing the land?**

The land was made available to the parishes for purchase about 5 years ago. As I understand it, at that time both parishes agreed that it would be wise to purchase it as a **possible** site for a new Church. A 10% non-refundable, down payment was made at that time. This gave us the right to exercise the option to purchase the land. Rather than lose the down payment, the parish councils and finance councils have agreed to exercise the option to purchase the land late this fall. If we don't exercise the option, then we might lose the possibility of buying the land later should we decide that this is the best location for the new parish.

So, what happens if we decide the best location for the parish is other than the St. Joe Campus? If we do not use the land for a new church, we can use it for some other purpose or we can sell it at a later date.

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## What's the Latest?

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In March of 2014, both parish councils approved motions to request that Archbishop Tobin close both existing parishes and establish a new parish of the existing members. In April, Archbishop Tobin granted the request. The parish councils have appointed a Long Range Planning Team to help lead us through the process of becoming one parish. For a listing of the members of that committee, see page one.

At this time, Archbishop Tobin has asked us to submit to him three possible names for the new parish. He will choose one of the three. He asks that the new name not be the name of an existing parish in our archdiocese. He has also asked us to submit a timeline of when we would like to be recognized as the new parish.

Our next step then will be to select a new name for the new parish. Here is the process we will use to do so: Sometime in the month of June, Fr. Tom will speak about the importance of names. He will look at the way names are used in the Bible. He will also explore Church law regarding the naming of a parish. At that time, parishioners will have the opportunity to submit names for consideration. From the names submitted, the top 10-20 will be placed on a ballot that will go out to all parishioners. Each parishioner will select their first, second, and third choices. The top three getting votes will be the three names that

we will submit to Archbishop Tobin.

As far as the founding date is concerned, we will rely on the work of the Long Range Planning Team to make recommendation, but we expect it to be sometime this Fall or Winter.

At some point before we officially become a new parish, Archbishop Tobin will officially "close" both existing parishes in order to form the new parish. When that is completed, we will continue to utilize both of our current Churches until a new or renovated church building can house the new parish. During that time we will refer to our campuses and the St. Joe campus and the St. Paul campus.

The process of merging organizations together is already at work. Currently, our parish councils meet both separately and together each month. A joint Christian Service Commission already operates, and we are working on making the Faith Formation Commission one as well. Of course, St. Paul School is also a joint ministry of both parishes and the Pastoral Team has been meeting together since July, 2013.

We have accomplished much and we thank all of you for your cooperation to date.

It is the strong belief of the Long Range Planning Team that prayer be at the center of this entire process. Please continue to pray for the success of our work. May we, as "living stones" always surround Jesus, "our cornerstone" so that we can build a spiritual house for the greater glory of God! (See 1 Peter 2: 4-9)