

# ST. JOSEPH PARISH AND SCHOOL – OCTOBER 29, 2017

## Dear Parishioners and Families,

In the fall of 2012 the parish with sadness but with expectant heart took down the sister's convent that had served the parish since 1922. This convent building of 4 stories, basement to 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, had a very small footprint and this made it impractical for renovation and further use. On the other hand, the old part of the school building also stemming from 1922 has seen practical and cost effective renovations. The most obvious is the renewal of Gaudete Hall and also now the Flora Cafaro Library.

I read in the newspapers with amazement and skepticism the many local levies for new school buildings as the avenue for improved education. However at Wheeling Jesuit University as President we totally restored 5 buildings at a much lesser cost than demolishing and rebuilding. At the same time, Wheeling Jesuit University became the strongest and most rigorous higher education university or college in the state of West Virginia. Good education emanates from superior teaching and leadership with vision.

This introduction leads me to these items taken up by the Parish Council on Tuesday. The Council is reflecting Pope Francis in #43 of his Joy of the Gospel. The Pontiff suggests that while we consider what has been done in the past, we further reflect that some items no longer seem as useful for achieving the best results.

The first issue the Parish Council discussed was the Grotto Store. This was most successful in years past but in current times shopping patterns using the internet are especially prevalent for specialty items. The Grotto Store currently receives relatively few visitors but takes up a great deal of time. The Council agreed that the use of this 400 square feet might be better for a temporary Youth Center and later on as a Museum and Archive for maintaining and displaying the history of parish and school stemming from 1831.

The Council recognized clearly that we must put more attention on our 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders and finding a special place for them. The parish is also in consultation with St. Peter of the Fields and their Youth Program. We see the use of the Grotto Store as a temporary site unless something else is proposed to us by the many parishioners of St. Peter of the Fields and St. Joseph. As soon as the Youth Program outgrows this small center we would turn it into a Museum and the Archive Center.

The Council also discussed the future of the Day Care Center building. It was agreed that the cost of renovating that building is not cost effective. We should maintain the vision of developing a new activity center for the parish that would include athletic facilities for the school, additional meeting rooms, and perhaps a youth center area. The Council also recognized the value of the widows/widowers group and their need for space to meet that is not dependent upon times available in Gaudete Hall.

Finally, the Parish Council took up the matter of the vision for our school – **A Rural Oasis of Superior Education Blended with Faith**. They agreed with the incentives both educational and financial to encourage parents and guardians to support the education and to practice their Christian Faith. St. Joseph is more than superior education. We believe that the strong and active belief in God is a critical component for superior education and Godly living.

In summary, St. Joseph Church and school does not wish to remain ordinary or the same. We aspire to take what we have been given and leave it better than how we found it. This is our mission under Christ.

Fr. Tom Acker, S.J.  
October 29, 2017