

Mother of Perpetual Help Congregation
1121 South 116th Street
West Allis, WI 53214

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Faith,

ADVENT 2018

In the last monthly mailing, we announced the new Mass schedule that will take effect on the first week of January 2019. From that point on, we will have 5 opportunities to attend mass at the Parish. Once again, the mass times will be:

- +Saturday @ 4:00 PM at our 116th Street site (Immaculate Heart of Mary)**
- +Sunday @ 8:00 AM at our 106th Street site (Mary Queen of Heaven)**
- +Sunday @ 9:30 AM at our 116th Street site (Immaculate Heart of Mary)**
- +Sunday @ 11:00 AM at our 106th Street site (Mary Queen of Heaven)**
- +Sunday Evening @ 7:00 PM at our 92nd Street site (St. Aloysius)**

+As mentioned in the monthly mailing, there are several reasons for this change. The first point we explored was attendance patterns. Over the past 10 years, we have seen a drop in the number of people attending mass. Our numbers are not far off from National and Archdiocesan figures. Over 20 years ago, parishes were directed to combine mass times that were less than half full and develop new schedules for worship. This has been done and the revised mass times are the result. To compare our seating capacities with actual attendance figures for the last 3 years, please see the charts on the second enclosed sheet.

+The second reason for the change is the reality of the clergy shortage. Our parish will be staffed by one priest sometime before June of 2020. These mass times can be reasonably covered by one priest, especially when help out clergy is available. For the past 10 years, each of our priests has been celebrating from 3 to 6 masses every weekend.

+ A larger congregation will increase participation. We know from experience, that singing, and overall engagement improve with more significant numbers in attendance. We have also seen a thinning in the ranks of extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, Readers, and Cantors over the years. Several of our masses rarely have a full complement of those needed to assist. With fewer celebrations, there can be a better distribution of labor. We will also be renewing our current ministries and seeking new volunteers to add to our numbers in the coming months.

+ Except for the 7 PM Mass at the St. Aloysius site, the new times are only a half hour different from the previous times. There is, of course, the elimination of a morning mass time at 92nd Street and the relocation of the earlier time to the 106th street site. Again, we need to acknowledge the past and present sacrifices made by St. Aloysius as we strive to come closer together as a people of faith.

+ With our Child Christian Formation Activities happening on Sunday mornings, it is vital to have enough time to offer families the opportunity to attend mass together before or after their instruction time. Other Sunday programs can also take advantage of the same time frame in their planning.

+ We will all need to make some adjustments. Still, the chance to have several mass times, one on Saturday Evening and several on Sunday Morning and Evening will serve our community for many years. We trust that the sincere desire to be a part of the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of our Faith will help us overcome the negative feelings which are naturally a part of any real change. This is a significant step forward in our journey together to become one parish community, knowing that whatever we do together, we will do better. The second part of this letter will talk about several points of interest in the progress of our site planning.

WE CONTINUE TO DEVELOP A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Earlier in the Fall, three meetings were held, one at each of our parish sites. The purpose of our time together was to share specific information and begin a conversation about choosing one of our current locations as a single permanent parish home. Specific topics were:

- Current parish debt (about 1.2 million dollars @ the 116th street site)
- Needed seating capacity (700 seat capacity worship space) 106th & 116th require additional seats.
- Needed Gathering space at all three locations.
- Deferred maintenance needs at each former parish location (\$125,000.00 to several million dollars, depending on location and the scope of the work that needs to be done).
- Properties have been listed by a commercial real estate agent to test market interest.
- What needs to be done to each space to make it our permanent home.

Early in the process, an offer to purchase the 116th Street site was made. Our Transition Team and Finance and Pastoral Councils recommended sending the proposal to the Archbishop, as we have stated several times in the past, the final decision regarding any sale is his. All proceeds will, by church law, stay with the Parish. To date, **NO DETERMINATION** has been made by Archbishop Listecki. We have had conversations, as there are several factors involved in this kind of sale but without conclusion. We hope to have news to report shortly after the new year.

Regarding interest in our three sets of buildings, several parties will be developing offers for each site shortly. Some are only interested in part of a building or property. Over at 92nd Street, 2 groups are interested in the school, gym and parking lot, or just the gym and parking lot. At the 116th and 106th Street sites, there is some interest in acquiring the entire site. At 106th Street there is some interest in buying the building and land next door as well. One group wants only the school and part of the parking lot at 106th Street. Several other developers and institutions are showing interest, but no new offers for all or any portion of the buildings or land have been made to date. **When that happens, it will be announced publically as was the initial offer.** Please remember, if you have not heard it from the pulpit or read it in a letter such as this, it is only a rumor, regardless of the source of information.

We are committed to working out the plans for our future in a timely fashion. We also believe that we will have a determination of which site will best serve our long-term needs before the summer of 2019. We also plan to have one worship site by the summer of 2020. It may seem that these dates are a long way off, and in a sense they are. However, given the number of participants in the discussion and the needed approvals that must come from the Archdiocese, we think this timeline is reasonable and achievable.

As a follow up to our conversations at the Site proposal meetings, we will post the powerpoint used at the meeting and a walk-thru of the proposals in greater detail. We had hoped to achieve this sooner, but the time frame was altered by discussions regarding the future of our combined Catholic School and the early offer on the 116th street buildings. At that point, we did not anticipate the complexity of that part of the conversation, primarily as it affects the planning process for all of West Allis and West Milwaukee.

Please pray for the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit on all the members of our leadership and planning teams. May this Advent/Christmas season bring to you and to those you love, joy and peace. Let the new year be filled with all of the blessings needed to do all that we have set out to do. Like the Holy Family of Bethlehem, searching for God's will on their journey of faith, may we all come together as another holy family under the intercession of our Mother of Perpetual Help.

Fr. Jeff, Fr. Thomas, and the Pastoral Staff and Transition Team.