

**ST. MARY'S CHURCH**

6437 East Seneca Turnpike, P.O. Box 368  
Jamesville, NY 13078-0368

November 19, 2006

Rev. James P. Lang, V.E.  
Catholic Diocese of Syracuse  
Vicar for Parishes  
240 East Onondaga Street  
Syracuse, New York 13201-0511

Dear Fr. Lang:

This letter is to supplement and complement Fr. Yeazel's October 26, 2006 letter to you with the Pastoral Care Area recommendations from Holy Cross and St. Mary's. It is offered to more fully conform to the spirit of Bishop Moynihan's directives discussed in your June, 2006 letter. This letter specifically addresses and supports the PCA's recommendation number four which calls for two sites: one at Holy Cross and the other at St. Mary's. Weekend liturgies at St. Mary's would sustain the spiritual and financial integrity of the faith community in the greater Jamesville area.

**St. Mary's Parish**

St. Mary's Church is a unique community. There are 350 registered families in the parish. The church building is 107 years old and is likely the oldest church in the Town of Dewitt. It is graced with valuable and historically significant stained glass windows designed by Henry Keck. St. Mary's is located in the highly regarded Jamesville-Dewitt School District. It has a small town feel, yet it is 10 minutes from downtown Syracuse. The traditional houses of its main streets are surrounded by new housing developments.

**established 1899**

St. Mary's consists of a rectory and church building. The rectory, an older home, houses the parish secretary's office and the food pantry. The church seats 220. There is a parish hall in the church basement which is used for religious education classes and parish events. It contains a modern, well-equipped kitchen and the religious education coordinator's office.

### **Financial stability**

St. Mary's is solvent. Its assets amount to \$536,000 of which \$54,000 is cash. The parish has no debt. It annually meets its Diocesan financial obligations. For the last several years St. Mary's exceeded its Hope Appeal goals.

### **Facilities**

St. Mary's is evaluating the sale of its rectory and the relocation of its food pantry. The proceeds from the sale will provide funds for maintenance of the church and for the relocation of the food pantry and secretarial offices.

### **Growing area**

Studies by the J-D School District indicate that 70% of the growth within the District during the next five years is projected to occur in Jamesville. For example, 85 new homes were approved for construction in the Crown Point Development; 10 additional homes in Double Tree; nine additional homes in City Lights; eight in Jamesville Grove with another 12 homes awaiting approval; 140 units are in the final stages of completion in Shadow Hills; 77 homes are awaiting approval in Shadow Hills II; and 31 homes in the Hummel Estates development are in the final stages of approval. This amounts to total of 355 additional

households.

This construction translates to significant growth in the St. Mary's parish area. It is projected that over 1,000 people will be moving into the area within the next five years. Conservatively, this could mean more than an additional 500 Catholics in the Jamesville area.

### **Ministries**

St. Mary's food pantry is a successful, community-wide food bank. Area churches and community groups contribute food and money to the pantry. Through the efforts of the pantry, food is distributed year round to the greater Jamesville-Dewitt community. Last year 476 households comprising 1,349 individuals were served by St. Mary's food pantry.

For over 25 years St. Mary's has provided religious education to children at Jamesville Elementary School (grades 1-4) located a block from the church. Busing arrangements are in place to assure that the children are safely brought to and from classes. Middle school students and confirmation preparation classes are also taught at St. Mary's. Approximately 170 children are in the religious education program at St. Mary's.

Through the auspices of Catholic Charities, St. Mary's sponsored a 12 member refugee family from Somalia. The parish response for requests for furniture, household supplies and clothing was overwhelming. Parishioners, including many confirmation candidates, cleaned and prepared the house for their arrival. Parishioners helped the family acclimate and continue to transport the family for grocery shopping. The parish too is a generous supporter of the

work of the Eastern Farm Workers organization.

## **Change**

In the past two years St. Mary's has had four different pastors/administrators each with their own particular pastoral style. Despite these changes and the elimination of two Sunday Masses during this period, the parish has remained a strong and committed church community due in large measure to the involvement of its parishioners.

## **PCA and parish involvement in the process**

St. Mary's actively participated in its previous Pastoral Care Area with parishes to the south of Jamesville. Since Fr. Lang's June, 2006 letter St. Mary's has met with its new Pastoral Care Area committees. After becoming a mission of Holy Cross in October, 2006, St. Mary's has met several times with the leadership of Holy Cross parish. The PCA notices/announcements you provided were included in the bulletin. Five separate meetings open to the entire parish were held to answer questions, discuss solutions and give parishioners an opportunity to share their thoughts on the PCA. Two well-attended listening sessions with the priests from Holy Cross were held at St. Mary's.

## **Participation in parish ministries**

What was clearly evident from these meetings was a strong commitment to be a part of the parish and a willingness share in the work of the parish ministries. Some of it came from parishioners who have long participated in the work and ministries of the parish. Most remarkable was the many younger families that stepped forward. These families moved to Jamesville and were

attracted to St. Mary's. As one young mother said, "St. Mary's is a parish where everyone knows your name". These younger families are willing to take leadership roles, share their talents and to infuse the parish with their enthusiasm.

To capture that energy and with the hope of keeping Masses at St. Mary's beyond June, 2007, a group of parishioners has been meeting each Monday evening since September. Everyone is welcome and Fr. Manno often attends. A brief report of the meeting appears in the following week's bulletin. The meetings examined ways to make St. Mary's more visible in the Jamesville community and to evangelize by contacting all households in the area. A phone survey was conducted and the response among parishioners was enthusiastic. Ninety-one percent of the 233 households contacted indicated that they wish to see St. Mary's continue to offer Masses to the community on a regular basis. Ninety percent of those who attend Mass at St. Mary's are willing to take an active part in the ministries of the parish. Fifty-nine percent are willing to volunteer an hour per week. A ministry fair is now planned at the end of November to harness this spirit.

### **Collaboration**

The Jamesville-Dewitt School District serves the children in both Holy Cross and St. Mary's. Through the medium of the J-D school system many parents and children in both parishes know each other and have a natural common bond. The two parishes are committed to continue to share ministries, e.g., peace and justice, liturgy, religious education, adult faith enrichment and

youth programs as well as social events.

### Conclusion

Throughout this re-configuration process we have stressed the positive. The group meeting Monday evenings is called "Mission Possible" to accentuate that trait. We seek, as Bishop Moynihan reminded us in his pastoral letter, "Equipping the Saints for Ministry", to not fear change, to leave no one behind, and to continue to pray and care for one another and our priests.

We believe that allowing our Pastoral Care Area to minister to the people from two sites, Holy Cross and St. Mary's, is the best plan for our PCA. It allows for two different pastoral expressions, while preserving a distinct faith community in a growing area. Both parishes compliment the other and are close enough to allow for the continuation of shared ministries, programs and liturgical services.

We urge acceptance of this recommendation. We prayerfully await the Bishop's decision.

Sincerely,

St. Mary's Pastoral Care Area Committee

*John P. Clinton*  
*Joseph N. DeBortis*  
*David Hagen*  
*Joanne Snyder*

cc: Rev. Msgr. J. Robert Yeazel  
Rev. John Manno