



Over the past several months, I have shared with you the work of the Church Exploratory Committee. All of my recent columns on the Committee's work can be found grouped together in one section of our parish website www.stjoesdtown.org. Look for "Church Exploratory Committee" under "Parish News" and all the columns will be there.

As you know an architectural feasibility was done by Casaccio Architects, *Mission Driven Design*, in consultation with the Committee. In previous columns, I described the various elements that the committee members hoped to see in either a renovated/expanded church or a new church.

Some of the main reasons this study was undertaken are as follows: 1) **Demographics**- The parish continues to grow and continued growth is projected in the years to come. The Archdiocese has no plans for a new parish in our territory. In this year alone, we have registered 251 families and baptized over 200 babies which is the same rate at which baptisms were taking place at the time Saint Elizabeth's was founded in 2000; 2) **Available Clergy**- In 2004, Saint Joseph Parish had a pastor, three assistants and a high school priest in residence. In 2008, we have a pastor, one assistant and a high school priest in residence. In the near future there will be a need to have fewer Masses with greater seating capacity; 3) **Seating capacity**- there is a need to expand the capacity. At the present time our church seats 850. To responsibly plan for the future, the seating capacity should be at least 1,200; 4) **Adequate Prayer and Gathering Space (Narthex)** - Presently, there is no place for parishioners to gather before or after Mass. There is little quiet in Church for those who wish to prepare for Mass or have a quiet time of thanksgiving afterwards. Several more reasons for this study are appropriate programming, overhauling of electrical and sound systems, restroom facilities and access for those with disabilities.

During the study, the architects consulted with contractor E. Allen Reeves, Inc., who provided cost estimates for both a renovated and expanded church and a new church. This contractor has worked on over 300 churches. Therefore, the committee believes the estimates to be accurate and consistent with current construction costs. The result of the architectural feasibility study was that the difference in costs for a renovated/expanded church and a new church were minimal.

I presented the results of the study to our Parish Pastoral Council, our Finance Council and our Stewardship Committee. The majority of the membership of these councils felt, given the results of the study, it would be good stewardship to examine further the possibility of a new church.

Having said this, let me be clear that no final decision is made at this point. The next steps in the process are two-fold: 1) a Financial Feasibility Study must be done to consult with and determine the level of support among parishioners; and 2) a complete set of architectural drawings must be completed for review by parishioners during the Financial Feasibility Study. Obviously, the current economic situation of the times must also be taken into consideration as we move forward and will determine the rate at which this process moves.

I will be happy to share the results of the architectural feasibility study with any of our other parish groups as well as any individuals who wish to review them. After Christmas, I will continue to update you on this process by means of these columns and our parish newsletter. As we continue this process, please pray that the Holy Spirit will guide all of our efforts and whatever we do will be for the greater honor and glory of God.

God Bless You All!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Monsignor Lynn".

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