

November 28, 2023

Dear Fellow Parishioners of St Gianna,

The Unification Committee would like to update you on the renovation plans for Queen of Martyrs church. As many of you know, we have been meeting monthly for close to two years. In each of these meetings, we **collectively** discuss what this new reality will look like as our two churches become one. This committee is composed of people from both church communities that represent current school families, former school families, alumni, long-time parishioners, and other members that reflect the wide array of people that is St. Gianna Parish! We always welcome and present feedback to the greater team regarding what we have heard from you concerning these changes. This is a new reality that we are all adjusting to and working collectively towards. Our meetings can sometimes be passionate when we all don't agree but we are committed to work through these ideas and concerns *as a **community***. For some of us on this committee, we have been a part of this journey since the onset of *Renew My Church*. Almost instantly, we felt that these two church communities had a positive Christlike connection. This connection continues to carry us through today! We have also been blessed with the outstanding support of our priests. Father Benedykt, Father Ritchie, and Father Bob have been instrumental in providing unwavering support for this new mission, exceptional and thorough spiritual leadership, clear and concise communication, and welcomed feedback from all active members. No decision made in this committee is one-sided or dictated to the team. ***We work together! We struggle together! We pray together!*** As mentioned before, change is hard but necessary and we appreciate all the parishioners of St. Gianna's faith and understanding as we continue to move forward.

The work on the Parish Welcome Center will continue but we were faced with some unfortunate news regarding the heating system in this space. The boiler has stopped working and the price to fix or replace it is well over our budget plans. With that being said, the Adoration Chapel will move to St. Bernadette Church. Adoration will take place directly in the

church Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 2:00-6:30 PM. Please contact the rectory if you have any questions.

Starting next week, renovations to the interior of Queen of Martyrs will begin in earnest! We have been collectively planning and discussing for months and the entire team is excited to see the blending of these two communities continue forward. To minimize the intrusiveness of a project to this extent, the team has decided to complete it in phases. This will mean that construction will be going on in different parts of the church at different times.

The first phase will focus on the confessional area. As of Monday, December 4, 2023 the confessionals in the back of church along the ushers room will be dismantled for a new confessional space that will allow for handicap access, sound proofed walls, and a larger interior space that can accommodate either face-to-face or screened confessions. Additionally, a shrine to the Holy Family with a kneeler and candles will be created next to the new confessional and will act as a space for prayer and reflection.

The second phase will focus on the entrance space to the church from 103rd street. We will hopefully be able to add a handicap accessible bathroom in the Usher Room area, remove the walls of the "Cry Room" and open up that area in the front with improving the windows and doors, removing the drop ceiling, providing handicap access through the front of the church, and a Baptismal area where the other set of confessionals currently are located. This new Baptismal area will also have a shrine to Holy Mary and Saint Bernadette with a kneeler and candles that will act as yet another space for prayer and reflection.

The third major phase will be the church sanctuary. This project will begin mid-January and be completed prior to Easter Sunday! The plan for this part of the church will include mural painting, removing the carpet and sanding and shaping the altar stairs, creating matching side altars, wainscoting, and new lighting throughout this space (an artist's rendition will be made available). Because this will be an extensive project, Queen of Martyrs will need to adjust their mass availability. As of right now, mass will be offered in Vitha Hall, the school gymnasium, each Sunday at 10:30 AM. We had hoped to keep the church open throughout the renovations using this "phase" approach but by closing the church the work can proceed in an uninterrupted manner, and therefore finish sooner. We as the Unification Team feel this will be the best

solution. All traditional mass times--Saturday 4:00 PM, Sunday 8:30 AM and 10:30 AM--will still be available at St. Bernadette church.

We are eager to see these new updates as well as the up-to-code modifications made to the choir loft and our new LED sign that should be in place prior to Christmas! There are several other projects that will be happening once the interior of the church is complete. We are looking to add outdoor Stations of the Cross, provide cleaner handicapped accessible entrances for both Central Park and through the St. Joseph parking lot, and complete work on the new Parish Welcome Center.

Again, we appreciate all of the members of St. Gianna and welcome feedback at any time. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us individually or to call the rectory with any concerns, questions, or ideas; know that we will discuss what is brought to us and will continue to inform you and seek out your feedback through this entire process.

Grace and peace to you all through this Advent season,

Char Bermele, Linda Blaeser, Rick Biszewski, Katie Clark, Lois Kettering, Kevin Kirkland, Johanna Konieczny, Deacon Bob Landuyt, Phillip Maher, Eileen McNichols, Gina O'Connell, Father Ritchie Ortiz, Diane Pajkos, Father Benedykt Pazdan, Terry Reidy, Peggy Remiasz, Maribeth Rodela, Jenny Schmitt, Father Bob Tonelli, John Woolley, and Carol Zofkie