

Recently our parish committees have been talking about the renovation of our buildings. We've hired an architect to evaluate our structures and help us with a plan of action.

Several needs keep surfacing. For St. Rita's, we'd like handicap accessibility, more and better classrooms, office space, and improved kitchen and dining facilities. In the church, we're addressing the general appearance of the interior, our seating capacity, the flow at communion especially at funerals, the baptistry, the reconciliation room, a chapel for the blessed sacrament, and a gathering area with accessible restrooms where people can visit before mass.

We have a lot of questions. How good are our buildings? Can we retain their historical appearance while accommodating them to our needs today? Should we replace one or both buildings? Should we add more space? Should we buy land somewhere else and start over again? Should we leave well enough alone? And what can we afford to do?

We are starting to see a direction, but nothing is definite. Right now we need more input from you. I have called a special meeting of the parish on Monday night, September 8 to talk about the future of our buildings. Call it a town hall meeting. Call it a visioning session. Call it whatever you like, but I really hope you'll come. We need your advice to shape the vision of this project. Our parish hasn't considered anything this comprehensive since these buildings went up over 50 and 100 years ago. It's a critical moment in our history as a parish, and I really need your participation at this time.

All this is scary, but today's first reading is especially consoling. This prophecy from Isaiah usually comes up during Advent because it predicts a future when God will come again to save people who feel frightened and stuck. "Be strong," Isaiah says. "Fear not!" God will open the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf. The lame will leap like a stag and the mute will sing.

Whenever a parish or a family plans something on a large scale, it is a scary time. But it is also a holy time, a time when we rely on the strength of God to see us through.

I hope you'll make plans to come Monday night as we seek God's will for the future of our buildings.