

## A REFLECTION ON CHANGES AT ST. JOSEPH'S-FR. JIM

The last couple years St. Joseph's has cooperated in one way or another with Guardian Angels and Good Shepherd on 37 undertakings, such as the a tri-parish census, the Faith Formation & Sacramental programs, youth ministry (RHYM), the combined R.C.I.A., our joint Adult Education series, the shared Dinner Dance in which 240 people attended, the coordinated Holy Week Schedule, and the combined Liturgy Committee & Social Ministry Committee, as well as joint staff meetings and combined parish councils meeting together. Deb Housel, the diocesan representative for Pastoral Planning, said the RHCC process was one of the best she had seen in the entire diocese. Now we take another significant step in this process when we move towards our six Mass schedule for the RH Catholic Community beginning May 22/23.

Despite all this positive growth and development, I have to honestly say, as I conclude my time here, that I have been concerned about members of the parish that have pulled back their time, talent, and treasure (look at the trend for our weekend collections which really began well before the economic downturn or the poor response to our "volunteer sheet"). Some have even have left the parish altogether. This is a critical time in the history of St. Joseph's as a partner with Guardian Angels & Good Shepherd. The bottom line is that we need **everyone's** help and support as we face the challenging days ahead. Either people will see that the parish as part of the RH Catholic Community needs their help more than ever and increase their time, talent and treasure or people will hold back or even leave the parish, with some unfortunate consequences for St. Joseph's future, as well as the RHCC as a whole. I am concerned as we move into the new Mass schedule that we might loose members of our parish, and begin a downward trend that has happened to some parishes in our diocese that have already clustered. This is a key moment for all parishioners to decide if this new reality of our church life, no matter how it evolves, is worth investing in or not.

The approach in my three years here has been about the growth of St. Joseph's, not its diminishment. Why else would we have added two new handicap accessible bathrooms to the Church Hall, installed of an access lift system, and a new ramp, added new ceiling fans, and resealed the parking lot. Why would we have begun an evangelization committee (which has offered opportunities to reach out and welcome newcomers to the parish) or developed our web site, or completed a new census. Why would we have made strong efforts to increase our Faith Formation program, initiate the ministries of sacristan and greeters for our liturgies (including having more of our young people involved in our liturgical ministries) as well as have additional parishioners act as Eucharistic Ministers to those who were homebound or in nursing homes, develop the prayer shawl ministry, initiated a Social Ministry Committee, develop a new tithing approach, enhance the practice of our Perpetual Adoration, or begin the tradition of the staff recognizing and thanking our parish volunteers (with the parish's Volunteer & Ministry Appreciation Dinner). Most of all why apply for a new deacon for St. Joseph's (Deacon Jim Carra), if St. Joseph's as part of the RHCC did not have a viable future? All of this development has placed St. Joseph's as a strong partner with Guardian Angels and Good Shepherd, as we proceed into the new clustering reality.

I would conclude by asking the following questions:

Do I as a parishioner really see that I am an important part of St. Joseph's and the RHCC's future?

What areas of St. Joseph's still need attention or development in order to be as strong as partner as possible with Good Shepherd and Guardian Angels?

What can I do to become a strong a contributor as possible, as we head into the new adventure as part of the RH Catholic Community?"