

December 5/6, 2009

Dear Parishioners of St. Mary/St. Frances Cabrini,

As we begin the second week of the new liturgical year and look forward to the new calendar year, I want to tell you about plans being made for a conversation about the future of our parish. This conversation will be about who we are as a parish, how we see ourselves and the service and ministry we are being called to as a parish in this corner of Northeast Ohio and the Diocese of Youngstown. In so many words we will be asking ourselves what is the vital, effective parish we want to become as we look to our future?

I have invited Mr. Rick Krivanka, Director, Pastoral Planning Office with the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland to facilitate this conversation, a conversation I want as many of us as possible to have. I have asked Sr. Barbara, and a representative from both the Pastoral Planning Council and Finance Council to join me this week in meeting with Mr. Krivanka to begin the conversation about our parish and to make plans for a Leadership Team to assist in the parish conversation. This Leadership Team will be made up of the members of both councils as well as members of the parish who are willing to take on some of the responsibility for the conversation. The Leadership Team preparation will be, I believe, sometime in January. The conversation with the entire parish will take place in February or early March. My immediate plans are for this conversation to continue into the middle of 2010. All of this will depend on the parish conversation in February.

Included in this week's bulletin is an article, "Changing Parish Demographics," for you to read and reflect on in preparation for the parish conversation. In subsequent weeks the following articles will be inserted: "Coping with Change," "Grieving Mindfully," "Dealing with Resistance," "Are We There, Yet," "Preparation and Planning Stages," "Implementation Stage," "Work Load for Priests," "Priests and Parishes, A Canonical Perspective," and "Welcoming: Theological Foundations."

My purpose in giving you these articles is to stimulate your thoughts and ideas for our future as St. Mary/St. Frances Cabrini Parish. Advent is a season of preparation, but also one of surprises and living in anticipation of what is to come with the birth of Jesus and the coming of God's Kingdom. May this season also be a period of preparation, surprises and anticipation for all of us as we unfold our parish's future.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Reverend Raymond J. Thomas VF  
Pastor