



Dear Parish Family,

This is the announcement I shared before the 10:30 Mass this past weekend at our Sacred Heart campus. Let us pray that God will bring us strength, unity, and healing.

In the Fall of 2020 into early 2021 with pastoral and finance councils, as well as parish staff, we identified the need to reconsider maintaining all three of our campuses. Just over two years ago I formed a Facilities and Mission Task Force composed of members tied to all three campuses of Epiphany. Its purpose was to make recommendations regarding our facilities to better help us focus on our mission. The Task Force helped choose RCM architects, whose architects and contracted engineers performed a thorough physical assessment of each facility in late 2021. In the spring of 2022 RCM also surveyed and did in person interviews of many parishioners in our ministries to determine parish space needs.

This past September our first all parish meeting regarding our facilities and mission took place. RCM Architects' Facilities assessment was shared, including potential costs of repairs at each campus as well as proposals for our parish moving forward using their data and the potential costs of each. This past January our second all parish meeting took place to share more of the story of the challenges we face with all of the overwhelming amount of time, energy and resources that are devoted to our facilities, as well as seeking further parishioner observations via written input and questions. The final meeting of our Facilities and Mission Task Force took place in early March to process parishioner feedback and present final recommendations to me.

After much further prayer and consultation with diocesan personnel, I presented a facilities recommendation to both our Pastoral and Finance Councils this past Tuesday. I received their support to petition or request Bishop Thomas to relegate Sacred Heart Church, which would mean Epiphany of the Lord would no longer use the Sacred Heart church building for divine worship. We will now await the bishop's final determination and until then Sacred Heart Church will remain open as usual, while our Mass schedule will be reevaluated as the process moves along. Bishop Thomas is required by Canon Law to consult the Presbyteral (Priests') Council and obtain their opinion about the matter prior to making a decision. The request to relegate the church largely rests upon the findings of the facilities assessment and the great difficulty in continuing to maintain Sacred Heart church due to its uncertain structural viability and extensive financial burden of needed repairs, especially considering the needed repairs at each of our other churches. Declining parish population and Mass attendance are also major factors motivating this request. In addition, in recent years 24% of our parish expenses go to regular upkeep and maintenance of our numerous facilities (this does not include capital projects) while the average parish dedicates only 10% to facilities maintenance.

Our process and having to make this recommendation have been very difficult for me, yet I cannot imagine how difficult it may be for you. I pray that we will be able to join together as the living stones of Epiphany of the Lord Parish, fixed on the Living Stone of Jesus, as this process continues with the presentation of the recommendation to Bishop Thomas. The Lord will not abandon us but calls us to place our hope in Him and take refuge in His Sacred Heart.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Father Eric'.

Father Eric