

Handing over All Saints Academy: Relief and Challenge for Our Community

We have finally arrived at a solution to relieve our parish of the costly burden to maintain All Saints Academy, the large building located one block east of our church at 310 E. 8th St., while still retaining ownership of the property. We trade in this maintenance burden for another big challenge of accommodating our large parish community without this large, flexible meeting space at All Saints Academy that we have enjoyed for decades.

All Saints Academy has been serving our community and parish since 1925: as a high school, an elementary school, a host to youth SEARCH retreats, and non-profit activities. Most recently it has served as home to our very active Hispanic Ministries and, at times, our RCIA and Youth Group. However, the building has fallen into disrepair and become unsafe to inhabit, and we determined a few years ago that the cost to make it habitable reaches into the millions — far beyond the means of our budget to support. It also costs a significant amount in utilities to keep it open, at a time when we are operating on a large deficit. Selling the property is not allowed to us by the diocese. Even the cost of demolishing the building and rebuilding a smaller one on site or putting in a parking garage was investigated, but the cost would be exorbitant. Therefore, because of safety and liability concerns, we decided to lease the building out to a developer who can invest to bring the building back up to code and turn it into office space. A developer has now signed the contract, and it is in the final stages of review by our diocesan attorneys. It is a 31-year ground lease, which the developer has the option to renew. You may recall that several developers have considered taking on the building to provide low-cost housing using grant money, but they have each had to walk away for lack of funding.

We have already begun the transition out of All Saints Academy. The non-profit groups we were hosting have moved off-site. Even though we may retain use of All Saints Academy for six more months, the heat in the building is inoperable, which means we will have a difficult time accommodating all the different activities that take place under the auspices of our parish, and spaces like Varallo Parish Hall and the RE Building will be taxed heavily. **It is imperative that we exercise the Christian virtues of patience and humility as we enter this new phase of unity in the life of the parish.**

Once the developer begins renovations next spring, we will no longer be able to use any of the rooms in All Saints Academy, for the short-term or long-term. The challenge we face as a parish is: where will our ministries go? We have been accustomed to using many rooms at All Saints Academy to support the large, vibrant, active Hispanic community who meet daily and comprise half our parish. The revenue that we will receive for the lease, coupled with the savings of the operating costs of All Saints Academy, is only enough to lease a small office in the downtown area, at current real estate costs. We will now need to unify all our ministries on our main campus. We will sometimes be unable to accommodate worthwhile activities. Varallo Parish Hall, being our one large room in the parish, will regularly be used by multiple groups at once, with the separation of our portable partition walls. This arrangement will require consideration and tolerance between groups who share space. I am asking that our ministries look into moving some activities off-site, where possible, to allow for other groups to meet on campus. We should see this challenge as an opportunity to develop the virtue of humility, which can open up fruitful possibilities in our community that we have not yet imagined. Think of it like a full house with one bathroom. In any house with a large family, much sharing and sacrifices are required, but the benefits of having a large, faithful family are well worth it!

As part of the deal with the developer of All Saints Academy, because the building will be used for offices and not residences, we will be able to continue use the parking lot on the evenings and weekends, when we truly need it most, during our Masses and other large group activities. With downtown parking at such a premium now, we should all rejoice in this bonus!

I have also told you in a recent pastor's notes about the efforts of our Hispanic community to purchase an annex building for their evangelical outreach activities. They currently rent two smaller buildings privately for this outreach, but they have outgrown one of the buildings and are seeking to expand. You may not be aware that one of the reasons our Hispanic community has grown so much in numbers recently is because of the efforts of this off-campus ministry. *They are spreading and living the Gospel message in our neighborhoods, just as we are all commissioned to do!* They have located a large, flexible space on 23rd Street that could serve their many evangelical outreach activities, but could also serve as an overflow space for some of our parish ministry activities that have normally met at All Saints Academy. They have saved up a sizeable down payment, and they have means through regular fundraisers to pay the monthly mortgage cost for this building. They plan to give the diocese the title and ownership of the building, and thus the liability would be covered under our diocesan insurance policy. Though our Hispanic community has the means to pay the mortgage, the challenge is determining who can sign for the mortgage. Our parish is not at liberty to sign a mortgage. The diocese is unable to sign because of current debt. **The ability to purchase an annex building for our Hispanic ministries will depend on the generosity of private individuals in our parish community to come together to sign as individual guarantors for a portion of the mortgage or to offer a donation towards the purchase of the building.** If you are blessed with the means to allow you to participate in either of these ways, I invite you to consider whether you might be called to share this valuable gift of stewardship for our parish at a time when we are growing in numbers and shrinking in space. Having this annex building would help our parish grow and avoid having to cancel activities for both our English and Spanish speaking communities. Please call the parish office to find out more about this need.

Rev. J. David Carter