

VISION FOR THE BETTENDORF CATHOLIC CHURCH

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How urgent is it for the parishes to consider future construction?

There are many compelling reasons for moving forward with the decision-making process. Here are the ones which have surfaced most among both parish's leadership. The parishes have already invested three years in gathering the information and detail to make an informed decision.

Fr. James Vrba, the pastor of St. John Vianney, will be retiring in June of 2021. It is very important for St. John Vianney and the Diocese of Davenport to know what the future plans for the parish will be as a new pastor is assigned.

Once a parish decides to construct a new facility, it usually takes from 3 to 5 years before the shovel is literally "put in the ground." Why? There are a number of diocesan approvals which must be requested as well as financial feasibility studies and architectural renderings. A capital campaign will need to be conducted and the project cannot begin until 60% of the total cost is contributed not pledged. Unless there is a parishioner who can fund the whole project by writing a check, the project will take years rather than months.

Every month that a decision is delayed will add increased costs to the construction because of inflation and building demand in the area.

Why is Catholic School part of the future?

Catholic schools do what no public or secular institution can do, extend the ability of parents and families to form the faith and character of young people from prekindergarten through 12th grade. Catholic schools are part of the lifelong faith formation mission of the Catholic church reaching from "womb to tomb". Our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Davenport have an excellent track record of preparing students for success in life academically, morally, and spiritually. Prekindergarten through 12th grade are the most formative years for future generations. Catholic schools in Scott County are accomplishing this with academic excellence and an individualized learning experience that meets student needs within a strong Catholic faith-based community. The faculty and curriculum in Catholic schools have the unique ability to influence students 6-8 hours per day, every day of the week during the school year. Schools are a special mission of the Catholic Church to form young people into adults who will lead in the church and bring the Gospel of Christ to the world.

What is the enrollment trend for Catholic schools in Bettendorf? For Religious Education?

For Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School, the 5 year average is 227 and enrollment was 229 last year, up from two years prior. For fall 2020, enrollment at the school opened with 226 students in Kindergarten through 8th grade plus 86 children in PreK. The overall trend is stable, with K-2nd grade being up 10% this year. Enrollment for St. John Vianney preschool is 36 students for fall 2020. New site and facilities that expand offerings should increase Catholic School enrollment. The total number of Catholic school students in Scott County last school year 2019-2020 was 2,267 in K through 12th grade plus 368 in PreK.

Religious education enrollment is certainly a larger program at St. John Vianney than at Our Lady of Lourdes. Enrollment has been rather steady at Our Lady of Lourdes and was higher the last two years at St. John Vianney. K-12 religious education enrollment for 2019 was 164 at OLOL and 540 at SJV.

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How do the facility needs of OLOL Catholic School compare with the other Catholic schools PreK-12 in Scott County?

All Scott County Catholic Schools facilities of each school are aging, have deferred maintenance that needs to be addressed; and in some cases are inadequate to meet their current needs or provide the full range of quality programs a 21st century educational institution requires. Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School and All Saints Catholic School were highlighted by the prior Catholic School Study as having needs that must be addressed. Both schools are landlocked and short on space to meet current needs, as well as providing or expanding their academic and co-curricular programs. It should be noted that each school in Scott County has varying levels of facility needs and a master plan is needed that foresees strategic investments at all school sites once the regional system is in place. The co-chairs of the Scott County Catholic Schools initiative believe that any initiatives that address facility needs prior to regionalization will help with the implementation of the new system.

Keep in mind any new buildings are likely going to be designed with the idea of lifelong faith formation and evangelization, meeting the total needs of the parish. New facilities are not intended as single use buildings, which has sometimes been the case with historical design thinking. New flexible learning areas combined with design goals to serve multiple parish needs will make many parts of buildings useful and safe for a broad range of programming including religious education, youth ministry, and adult programming.

What is the financial feasibility of options being considered?

Adequate facilities are a major issue affecting ministry, present and future, at both parishes in different ways. Because facilities require major capital investments, the financial feasibility of raising money to build and maintain new facilities will be studied with survey and interviews when we have completed our recommendation and have architectural renderings.

One challenge we face now is that each option provided has an independent financial footprint, all involving capital costs. It is impractical to give a thorough analysis of the cost of each option without proper architectural renderings.

Our immediate goal in this process is to provide a recommendation in favor of one option. When there is agreement about a recommendation, a next step will be to engage professional architects and planners who can build a master facility plan that shows options for phasing construction, options for expansion, and options for all one site or utilizing two sites even as a transition plan. New construction will happen in proportion to the measured capability to raise the needed capital.

What does the word “merger” mean exactly?

In a merger process, two or more parishes become a new parish with a new name, one pastor, operate as one financial entity with one finance and pastoral council, unified parish staff team and office functions. There can be additional worship sites for Mass and other celebrations as well as facilities at multiple sites used for various purposes.

A merger can keep many ministries feeling similar to what they are today with changes in how the operational support behind the scenes happens. They can also produce new ministries or shared ministries for the entire Bettendorf community. Merger can continue many of the traditions and liturgical styles of each parish, some coming together and some still unique to each site. There are many possibilities that may or may not feel all that different to parishioners depending on how it is put together and how pastors/priests are assigned.

Mergers happen over time, generally over a few years. It is not assumed a merged parish has to be all on one site, as there are many successful mergers that use multiple churches and sites.

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With a move to a new location, how will the parish still care for the needs of all parishioners, particularly those in the downtown area?

Currently we do not minister on site like St. Anthony's with its window lunch program. Both parishes use their buildings to gather resources and then go forth to distribute them at other locations. So, we go to those in need, we don't expect them to come to us. With the new construction of the bridge, gas stations, hotels, and typical places for people to gather downtown have been replaced by condos and new establishments.

Coming together as parishes with combined resources and coordinated outreach can allow for an even greater care to the poor and those in need in the community.

If we were one parish, how would we compare from a total number of members to other parishes that have merged? Would we be at the small, medium, or large end?

Parishes differ in size across the country and the average size of parishes has been increasing. In 1995, the average size parish had 2,969 members. In 2019, the average size parish had 3,875 members (*source: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Fast Facts on the Catholic Church*). Parishes in the southcentral and southwest regions of the country tend to be the largest. For example, parishes in Texas can be as large as 30,000 members or, in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, parishes are in the 15,000 member range. Parishes of a size comparable to the combined memberships of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. John Vianney almost always “thrive” in dioceses across the country. The main reason, they are of a size that can offer more ministries which generates enthusiasm, vitality and funding. Many of them also achieve a sense of being smaller by working to develop small Christian communities within the parish so that people are known personally and feel a connection in small group settings. Today Our Lady of Lourdes and St. John Vianney parishes together have memberships of 2,968 households (spring 2020), about 9,195 parishioners.

Will the small group meetings, parish-wide zoom meetings and survey be sufficient to engage parishioners?

Engaging the parish community on a broad level is important so excitement and ownership are deeply felt for whatever direction is taken. The process is attempting to reach out on many levels and provide multiple opportunities for listening and discussion. Most engaged are parish leaders. Of greater concern is engaging the wider parish community. Getting to the right decision certainly benefits from broad input but will also be possible with the collective knowledge and wisdom of the hundreds of people already involved. An evaluation will be made in November, if more time and more discussion is needed, or if the decision should wait until a future time when and if larger gatherings of people are possible.