

SAINT MARK'S CHURCH
215 CRESCENT PARKWAY
SEA GIRT, NEW JERSEY 08750
732-449-6364

Dear parishioners:

I am writing to update you on the status of the Diocesan "Faith in Our Future" initiative. I wish to thank all those who participated in the survey on parish life here at St. Mark's as your input was most helpful to us.

Our committee has had a number of meetings with the members of the committees from our designated co-hort parishes, namely, St. Catharine's, St. Rose and St. Elizabeth's. Our discussions focused on how we could collaborate better as a group in providing more effective ministry to all of our parishioners through sharing programs and ministries and by avoiding unnecessary duplication. We have submitted our plan to the "Diocesan Planning Committee" for their input and then they will return it to us for further discussion.

In Advent, based on the input from all the parishes in the diocese and on the recommendation of the "Diocesan Planning Commission", Bishop O'Connell will decide which parishes will be merged, twinned or will remain independent. In order for a parish to remain independent, as we all hope and pray will be the case with St. Mark's, the parish needs to be a vibrant faith community with well attended Masses, with many active Ministries and Organizations and be financially viable on an operating basis.

As is the case with many parishes today St. Mark's has seen a very noticeable decline in the number of parishioners attending Sunday Mass on a regular basis. Our parishioners were extremely generous in their response to the Diocesan "Faith to Move Mountains" campaign, for which I am so very grateful to all of you who made pledges. However, coupled with the drop in Mass attendance the parish has seen a troubling decline in our weekly revenue, resulting in a significant yearly operating deficit. The diocese looks at a parish's ability to operate financially in the black each year as one of the important criteria which it uses to determine its long term viability.

Our parish has many very active Ministries and Organizations and I am most grateful to all those parishioners who give so generously of their time, talents and financial resources to help make St. Mark's the vibrant, faith filled parish which it is today. All of our Ministries are always looking for new members. I invite all of you not just to attend church with your families on a regular basis, but also to consider becoming actively involved in the life of the parish. Your regular attendance at Mass and your participation in parish life is extremely important for the continued, growth, strength and spiritual vitality of the parish.

I would ask all of you to pray for the success of the "Faith in Our Future" Diocesan initiative in which we as a parish are presently participating, and that St. Mark's will remain as a strong, vibrant and independent faith community, just as it has for the past sixty three years.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. Sean P. Flynn
Pastor

SPF/gd