

Dear members of St. Clare Parish,

In the next couple weeks, our parish bulletin will contain inserts sharing information gathered and assembled for your review, by the Exploratory Committee. These inserts will be posted on the St. Clare website at www.stclareagw.org.

A "Town Hall" format meeting for your input will be held on Thursday evening, October 3 in the auditorium of Wrightstown High School as the committee prepares it's final report.

The Exploratory Committee is comprised of Russ Aerts, Father Dennis, Dick Geurts, Carolyn Green, Julie Rohan, Rick Roundy, and Karla Voss.

Insert One

Unity

...so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. (John 17: 20)

As Jesus approached his life-giving death he prayed that the "oneness" he had with his father would be a real oneness with his disciples as well. In this oneness evangelization would be possible. For his disciples to be credible witnesses, this unity with the Father and one another would be necessary for the world to believe that he was sent by the Father.

Unity or oneness is an essential component if a community of disciples, or a parish community, is to seriously carry out its mission to bring Christ's message to the world. We live in a world that is seemingly becoming more secularized and losing sight of the holy while hungering for meaning in life. We can accomplish our mission only if we are more closely united to Christ by responding to his call to holiness. Without this unity to the Father, to Christ in the Holy Spirit and to the community of disciples, our holiness is hollow. Thus we are called to unity.

Four years ago, our original parish pastoral council wrote this mission statement for the infant St. Clare Parish:

We, the united St. Clare Catholic Community of Askeaton, Greenleaf and Wrightstown, bring the love and teachings of Christ to all, locally and globally, through

- *Prayerful worship and lifelong faith formation*
- *Compassionate service and hospitality*
- *Generous sharing of time, talent and treasure*

From our formative stages as a parish, being united as one has been central to our mission. Each time we make decisions for the future of our parish we ask if it will bring unity. About eighteen months ago, after study and reflection for about a year, work was concluded on a long range plan for our parish. Eleven separate study committees proposed ideas, goals and objectives. All the goals continue to be studied and implemented as pastoral activity allows. As part of the planning process, five priorities for the next five years were identified. Three of those five focused on studying the feasibility of establishing one unified worship site that all of our community could see as their new home; two priorities included all worship, school and other educational facilities as part of one site as well. (The entire plan is available on our parish website: www.stclareagw.org).

In early 2013 an “exploratory committee” began to study this feasibility. For the next several weeks you will be receiving summaries of their work. This committee studied some basic understandings of Catholic Worship, and what worship space must include in order to celebrate Sacraments well as envisioned today; they toured several new and renovated churches in the Diocese of Green Bay; as part of these tours they interviewed and carefully noted the processes used by other parishes as they built new places of worship particularly when the new worship space was part of the unification of merged parishes.

As this *exploratory committee* worked, they were constantly reminding themselves that the work we do today is for tomorrow and future generations of Catholic Christians. Although we long to see our work being completed, the work of growing the church or building the Kingdom is always future oriented and until the end of time we will only glimpse that hope. While we respect the past and are grateful for what we have inherited, we must always look to what we intend to give our children. We are reminded of the words of Ted Dunn: “When a community has more memories than it does dreams, it is dying.” Thus, it is important that we dream as we set forth plans for St. Clare Parish.

We have all heard the saying: *the family that prays together stays together*. As a faith community we rarely pray together. We celebrate five Masses at three different worship sites every weekend. With this being the case, we do not unite in prayer as a parish community is called to do. In some ways the convenience we offer in times and locations works against the unity we strive to accomplish.

When a couple marries, the manner of celebrating holidays evolves. Often for the first few Christmas celebrations or Thanksgiving Days, the couple travels and rejoins the family of origin of one or the other spouse. As time progresses, and they have children of their own these celebrations evolve where they establish new traditions with their new family and the now grandparents join in their children’s home. The new couple in speaking about being “home” for holidays, no longer sees home as where they were children, but now see home as where they are parents raising the next generation. As a new parish, we evolve to find ways for the Community of St. Clare to make new traditions, no longer living in the home of the past.

Central to parish life is a place where the people of God of a particular community return every Sunday for refreshment and renewal around the table of God’s Word and the table of the Holy Eucharist. (see Bishop Ricken’s Pastoral Letter: *Parishes: Called to be Holy, Fully Engaged, Fully Alive*). This nourishing of a parish community gathered with their pastor around one table is what makes us one.

In the next several weeks, as more reports from the *exploratory committee* are published, please prayerfully consider each theme. This week in your prayer, we invite you to reflect on the ways in which a new parish worship site or total new campus can help us carry out our call to unity and our mission to evangelize in our parish and then to the broader community.