

19 March 2020

The Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Dear Friends,

The meeting on Saint Patrick's Day, Tuesday, March 17, concerning the condition of the church roofing infrastructure and what solutions could be devised by all of the engineers engaged in examining the problem was held as scheduled, despite the restrictions impacting all of us due to the Corona virus outbreak. As a result, I want to keep you, the parishioners of Saint Thomas Aquinas, informed as we move forward in dealing with this issue.

A total of eight engineers, and representatives of the Diocesan Building Superintendent's Office were on hand to discuss the church roof and analyze the solutions being considered. The team recommended, from several designs for the structural support of the roof, the best solution. The recommended plan has several very positive aspects:

First, the solution accomplishes its primary goal which is to support the existing roofing trusses.

Second, the solution provides additional support for our plaster ceiling which is irreplaceable.

Finally, the solution preserves the interior architectural integrity of Saint Thomas Aquinas Church. In other words, when you walk into the church there will be no additional support columns. When completed, the church structure should look just like it does today.

The first step of implementing the solution will involve moving the church pews, Stations of the Cross, and other liturgical furnishings to an off-site location for storage while the work takes place. We hope this can begin soon, perhaps in a few weeks.

The initial phase of the project will involve "shoring up" the roofing infrastructure as it currently exists.

Following the "shoring up" project, the second phase of the project will begin, which will put the permanent solution into place. During this phase of the project, you can expect to see cranes placed on the south side of the church for the purpose of lifting supplies into the church attic. It will also be necessary at some point to close the alley between the church and rectory for work trailers and other project needs.

While we are still in the very early stages of this project, I am certain you are wondering, as I am, what will be the project's cost and when will the church be able to reopen? There are a few more steps for us to take before we have a clear idea, but the good news at this moment is the roofing infrastructure can be repaired and we have a very solid plan and are beginning to work toward this goal.

The cornerstone of Saint Thomas Aquinas Church was blessed and laid on Saint Patrick's Day, March 17, 1842. The cornerstone for this roofing infrastructure project was symbolically laid on Saint Patrick's Day, March 17, 2020, 178 years later. Throughout the day of our meeting my thoughts went back to those faithful Irish immigrants who gathered on a cold and blustery late winter day to seek the blessing of the Apostle to the Irish on their holy endeavor to erect an edifice pleasing to the Most Blessed Trinity. What sacrifice and what faith our ancestors possessed! Their perseverance inspires all of us to make the necessary sacrifices to see that their work, almost two centuries ago, will continue to proclaim the Catholic Faith in the heart of Zanesville and Muskingum County for generations to come.

Peace and blessing,

Father Sullivan