

# Renewing and Restoring the House of God



Several of the St. Boniface Martyr parishioners who served on committees responsible for the success of the recent fundraising campaign to "Renew and Restore the House of God". Photo by Carol Griffin

By Carol Griffin

St. Boniface Martyr Parish in Sea Cliff just completed the first phase of "Renewing and Restoring the House of God" Campaign successfully raising more than \$1,000,000 dollars in pledges to begin renovation of the interior of the church. The project that began in September and over time it has created increased enthusiasm and support. Members of the community may have noticed the barometer in front of the church, noting the success of the campaign moving up from week to week until Christmas, when the success of the campaign was announced to the parish.

Parish pastor, Fr. Bob Romeo began the campaign in September with the assistance of a steering committee of parishioners, a liturgical architect, and Lynch Development secured to do a feasibility study and to manage the campaign. The goal at that point was to get the feel of how the parish community felt about supporting the plan. All of the parishioners were invited through letters and bulletin announcements to be interviewed, or fill out questionnaires. A series of parish meetings followed where several possible design options were presented. At the meetings, parishioners were given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the plan. From day one Fr. Romeo promised that if the parish on a whole was against the project he would not go forward with it but only make repairs as necessary.

In a letter to the parish community, the pastor noted that the parish is not only the House of God but it is also the House of the people of God. It is sacred space in which we encounter and worship the Living God; where God's people celebrate their life together, through liturgy, and the sacraments. He emphasized that "in our role as stewards for future generations, we have an obligation to Renew and Restore the House of God".

Fr. Romeo asked for everyone's prayer support as the parish family, come together in this effort. He emphasized that the joy that has been so evident in the parish's life will be enhanced as the excitement of a "Renewed and Restored" church building draws everyone even closer.

At each meeting Fr. Romeo thoroughly explained why he wanted to do the renovations and how they would benefit the parish especially noting how the design would draw the congregation together at liturgy, provide better auxiliary space and save considerable expenses on utilities in the future by the improved heating, air conditioning and lighting.

After the introductory meetings to explain the project were held in the church, additional meetings were held in parishioner's homes and at the church to further explain the project and to begin the pledging. This phase drew considerable support with half of the money pledged by Thanksgiving, which includ-

ed several large memorial donations. At this point, the parishioners at large were asked to help by meeting each week and contacting other parishioners in their homes. It was exciting as each week the support of the project grew and grew with additional parishioners pledging to the memorials and the campaign in general. By Christmas, the parish had not only reached its goal, but went beyond it.

Although complete details of the design has not been finalized, the overall plan intends to honor the past and provide for the future by repositioning the Tabernacle from the side to the back of the main altar, using the original mosaic and mother of pearl door from the original St. Boniface Church, to enhance the worship environment by bringing the congregation closer to the altar by reducing the size of the sanctuary and reconfiguring the pews for easier access. The installation of a high efficient burner and conversion to gas heat has already been completed. The plans also call for energy efficient lighting, modifications to the HVAC system and installation of new restrooms including one that is handicap assessable, and repair and renovation of the existing roof, doors and windows. When the design committee formalizes the plans, the final design will be presented to the entire parish for their input.

To increase veneration and devotion to the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, a shrine area will be created on each side

of the sanctuary using statues from the original church and move the statue of St. Boniface outside the school building to a place of honor in the new vestibule that will be increased in size to host a larger number of parishioners and guests for after Mass refreshments, meetings and other socializing.

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- Fr. Romeo

Fr. Romeo said he is excited about the vision and the campaign. "It has already brought many blessings to the parish," he said. "It has brought a number of the old parishioners back to the parish."

One of the members of the steering committee said, "It was gratifying to see how the parishioners came together in support of Father Bob's vision. Another parishioner noted, "Being involved in the campaign was very exciting by simply watching parish support grow from week to week." Another steering committee member with a very practical mind said, "Now that we have succeeded in raising the needed funds, we must complete construction/changes on time within budget, and with as little disruption as possible to our parish Mass schedule and other activities. Fr. Bob has been an inspiration in leading our financial campaign effort and I am sure he will continue his fine leadership as we enter the next phase of the program." Finally, another core member said she was "excited about the vision that Fr. Bob shared with the core committee early on. I believe that the restoration and changes in the church will enhance the liturgy and create curiosity for new members to join our parish. We were fairly aggressive implementing the vision which triggered the campaign but the time seemed right, the parish is alive with enthusiasm and growing. As a result of the campaign the true success is not only in reaching the goal but it was a reason to bring parishioners of all generations together to share in the vision and take ownership together. As a result many new relationships developed among parishioners and new members feel welcome to participate in many ministries in the parish."

Members of the steering committee include: Kevin and Maureen Angliss, Neil and Camille Miritello, Elena Villafane and Dan Kelly, Eileen and Larry Krieb and Frank Sujeci. Several dozen other parishioners have supported the campaign in various ways to help to make the project a huge success and bringing the parish closer together.