

## Building Committee - Father's Letter for Saturday, March 1, and Speech for Sunday, March 2

Good evening/morning, everyone!

It is truly a blessing to be in this parish. When I look at the number of young people involved in our Faith Formation programs, I am filled with gratitude. The growth of our parish and the enthusiasm for all the programs, organizations, and committees at St. Mary in Pella is a blessing not only for me but also for every parishioner who comes to Mass.

It is incredible to witness the spirit of our young people. The little ones at Mass, the increasing number at Liturgy of the Word, and the large turnout for Faith Formation — all these figures have grown dramatically over the last decade, and we anticipate this trend to continue.

Many factors contribute to this growth. Last year, we celebrated 23 Baptisms here at St. Mary, and this year alone, we welcomed 19 new families into our parish, many with young children. This is a wonderful blessing, but it also puts a strain on our facilities. Our Sunday Masses are often full or overflowing into the gathering space. Parking has become a challenge, with some people parking on the grass or turning around and leaving due to the lack of space. Our Wednesday evening classrooms are full, and with the addition of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program, we have run out of classrooms.

We must also be mindful of the projected shortage of priests in the coming years. Many Catholic churches are clustering to address the challenges posed by fewer priests. Some churches are closing, others are adjusting Mass times, and some are reducing weekend Masses. We need to recognize that such changes could happen here, and we must prepare for these issues.

It has become clear that we need to take action to accommodate our growing numbers. After much discussion, we have determined that as our parish grows, so too must our building. A committee has met, explored our needs, and developed a list of what is necessary here at St. Mary in Pella. I am pleased to announce that our first official step was to contact Bishop Walsh of the Davenport Diocese to seek permission to proceed with planning. I'm happy to report that the Bishop has given us the green light to start looking into enlarging our worship space, our educational wing and improving our parking facilities.

Thank you for your continued support as we embark on this important journey together!