

Build or Not Update

Welcome to the new Build or Not update column! As Father Kevin explained last week, we're going to say goodbye to Dave Ramsey for a bit, and use this space to give you some insights into the things that we're considering and discussing.

We started this process by talking with the various organizations of the parish. These groups had a variety of ideas on how the parish campus could be expanded to help them better meet their needs. Some of those ideas found their way into the survey that you completed. Some did not, but that doesn't mean we're dismissing them. It only means that they were smaller additions in nature, than the ones that were included.

That survey gave us, not a roadmap of what should be built or not be built, but rather a sense of what the congregation was thinking. Fr Kevin has already discussed, briefly, the ideas behind HVAC updates, the elevator and staff offices in one place. The other ideas, in priority order from the survey are: lighting in the parking lot, expanded narthex, permanent classrooms, large meeting room, dedicated youth group area, multi-purpose hall, expanded worship space and exterior Christian symbolism.

As you also know, we've met with representatives of the Diocese to get some ideas of trends in the diocese (and outside the diocese). For example, from the survey, the number one "write in" addition was a place for parents to take young children during mass – in other words, a cry room. The diocesan representatives told us that cry rooms have really fallen out of favor in the diocese, and in fact, across all denominations. Today, parents are encouraged to temporarily take noisy children to the Narthex until they've quieted. Today, cry rooms are seen as places where children cannot learn how to be quiet in church, because quiet is not required in "a soundproof room" (as one parishioner requested).

The primary concern of the Committee is the well-being of the parish. We recognize the welfare of the parish is dependent on many factors. But the facilities available to the parishioners must be one of these factors. For example, can a parish really grow if parishioners' ability to meet socially are limited? Similarly, can we truly be a welcoming parish if there's not enough room to adequately welcome visitors? We'll discuss these ideas, and others, in the next few weeks.

We don't have the answers yet. Even on the simplest question, "Build or Not?", we're still searching for direction. Over the next few weeks, we'll share some thoughts and ideas with you. We encourage you to discuss these ideas with one another, and with us. Last, but foremost, we ask you to pray with us and for us, as we seek God's guidance to find the path He has for St Jerome's.