

The "Old School" / the "New Hall"

Perhaps you have noticed the large dumpster outside the old school building. Over the last few weeks we have begun slowly working on this historic building to prepare it for our long term goal for it – a new, larger parish hall. Actually work began on it last fall when the first five new windows were put in the building. This building was built in, 1889 by our founding pastor, Fr. Dominik Kolasinski. The first floor was the church and on the second floor were the pastor's apartment and classrooms for our school which had begun in a private neighborhood home in 1886. We have from a newspaper article of 1889, a very detailed of the lavish quarters Fr. Kolasinski enjoyed in this building. Our founding pastor actually died in his quarters in this building on Easter Monday of 1898. Over the years the interior of this building was reconfigured many times. After the priests moved into our rectory, which was built in 1901 by Fr. Joseph Folta, the Sisters of St. Joseph lived on the second floor of the building until Bishop Plagens built them a convent in 1924. Now the convent serves as our parish hall and the school lies abandoned without electricity, plumbing or heat. Currently it is used to store larger articles used during our annual Pierogi Festival. In 2002 the Parish Council voted to spend over \$150,000 to put a necessary new roof on the building. This prevented further damage to the building and was only done after the assurance of a professional building inspector of the structural soundness of the old school. Of course this project is an overwhelming one. It is perhaps THE biggest project we have taken on yet here at Sweetest Heart of Mary, but at this point in our history it is a much needed project. As you can see and will continue to see, our current parish hall is inadequate for our needs. We have done everything we can to it to make it a lovely place, accessible to all, with a very efficient kitchen and meeting rooms. But every event seems to be sold out and folks/parishioners are being turned away for a lack of space. Our parish is growing. I'm feeling like the parent trying to keep children in shoes when they keep out growing them every few months! So, it seems to me and to others that now is the time to plan for and work for the future which is coming fast! Even this simple work of interior demolition and clean up requires financial support. It puts a strain on our budget that we had not really planned for, because it requires paying additional workers and the renting of numerous dumpsters. We are proceeding with this project now because we have determined that now(winter) is the ideal time to do this work. At this time we are confined to "inside" work. When spring and summer come the number of annual outdoor projects is enormous. And so I am asking for additional financial support for this project. At present each dumpster rented costs \$300. Dennis Felcyn has estimated that approximately 15 more dumpsters will be need to complete the demolition project. Then there is the matter of additional workers. Wages are needed for these workers, but there is also a plan for volunteer participation in the demolition work. The first "volunteer session" of demolition will be scheduled for a Saturday in March, with additional sessions to be scheduled as needed. Friends, please consider making a special donation of your money or time to this project that will in the long term benefit our parish so greatly. Already parishioners have come forward with generous donations to help keep this work going but the money is spent quickly on such an overwhelmingly big project. Long, long ago, the founding families of our parish in making great sacrifices to build our magnificent church were thinking of the needs of future generations. We must also think of the future of our parish and so many new parishioners who WILL come to us in the future. We must be able to accommodate them in the rich parish life we all enjoy in this Catholic community. This will only be possible if we have a building big enough for the whole parish "family" to find a place in it. At the same time we must think of new ways to create a financial foundation to secure the continual financial solvency of our parish. A hall the size of the one we are planning will be able to be rented out to the public for a variety of different social functions. This would present an excellent source of additional income for the future. And I dare say bring more and more notoriety to our historic and breathtaking parish. In a way this will be our parish participation in the renewal and revitalization of the city of Detroit. For events in our hall we bring many suburbanites into the city of Detroit where they will experience a city that is definitely on the mend.