

What are the plans for the "Old School"?

If you are reading this article you are probably standing inside the shell of what was once the first wing of Sweetest Heart of Mary Parish's Parochial Grammar & High School. The building has stood empty and somewhat abandoned since the last High School classes ended in 1966 and the last Elementary School classes ended in 1975. Once this building was a center of activity and the place where so many wonderful times were had by the many parishioners and friends of Sweetest Heart of Mary. Our plans are to make this building the center of parish social live and joyful times again!

The building was built in, 1889 by our founding pastor, Fr. Dominik Kolasiński. 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 description of the lavish quarters Fr. Kolasiński 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 artices needed 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 renovating this historic and important building is an overwhelming project. 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!

So far the interior of the building has been completely gutted. New flooring has been installed in a portion of the first level. Three glass block windows have been installed in the basement of the building, which has a beautiful terrazzo floor and glazed brick walls. Eventually a new professional kitchen is planned for the basement. Seven new windows have been installed on the second floor on the west wall. The Knights of Columbus have expressed an interest in locating their meeting rooms and offices there. A new steel door to the basement has been set into the back wall of the building which is in the process of being totally tuck-pointed.

At present the plan is to improve the outward appearance of the building first and then move to the interior, probably beginning with the basement. The basement will feature not only a fine kitchen but also a much more spacious "informal" hall for "coffee and doughnuts" after the Sunday Mass. The first floor will be for parish banquets on special occasions and for rental. We plan on even restoring the balcony over the front portico and the room in the base of the front "bell tower." It is an impressive place to observe the skyline of the city of Detroit.

Friends, please consider making a special donation toward 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.

For more information on this project call
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Your generosity toward this project will be greatly appreciated!

Bóg Zapłać!