

BLESSED KATERI CHURCH

November 5, 2006

Dear Parishioners of Blessed Kateri,

Today is an historic day in the life of our parish community. On this Sunday we will bless the ground for our new church, which will seat approximately one thousand people.

This is the number that Cardinal Egan chose, a sign of his trust in the growth of our membership, and a shepherd's commitment to make our parish better for us now - and ready to welcome even more people who move, and seek a warm spiritual home.

Included in this building will be a chapel for daily Mass, small funerals and weddings, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (we will call this space "Holy Eucharist Chapel") and a large flexible room for Children's Liturgy of the Word, for coffee, socializing, meetings, classes, which will hold 150 people or more (to be known as "Holy Family Hall").

Think about this: we became a parish of our own, no longer a mission of St. Columba, just four and a half years ago. Blessed be God for his help!

Our connection with St. Columba Parish is saluted today in a special way by the presence of Bishop Dominick Lagonegro, who will be the main celebrant of the 10:30 Mass. Bishop Dom is the Episcopal Vicar for the upper counties of the Archdiocese and Pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Newburgh.

But before that he was the Pastor of St. Columba. He started our community as a mission church. We are very happy to welcome him home today.

We received a letter this week from our Archbishop, Edward Cardinal Egan, congratulating our parish on this milestone in our communal life. His Eminence wrote that he looks forward to dedicating the new church in the not-to-distant future. With good fortune, we expect that to be in the late spring of 2008 – the Bicentennial Year of the Archdiocese of New York.

We would certainly not be in the advantageous position we are in now, if it were not for the strong commitment to our growth and generous financial arrangements made in our parish's favor by His Eminence. I am proud to share with you the latest numbers from our fundraising, which show the very strong support our community is giving to this project, which includes the conversion of our present church into much needed additional classrooms for our religious education students.

At this time last year, we were in the midst of our fundraising for this twelve million dollar project, aiming at a very ambitious goal: two million dollars. Parishioners have responded wonderfully, and new pledges still come in each week. As of now we have received 460 gifts. \$810,715 has been given already. The total amount pledged is \$2,168,623.

To commemorate this ground-blessing day, each churchgoer can take home a memento that will remind you to pray for us and our new home. On a pen, we have written these words: LORD JESUS / HELP US BUILD / A BEAUTIFUL CHURCH / FALL, 2006 – SPRING, 2008. God certainly knows who you are and what church you are talking about. So use this pen and say this prayer often.

Congratulations are due to our two parishioners who are candidates for the permanent diaconate. John Barone and Robert Horton are making steady progress towards the Sacrament of Holy Orders. On October 6 Bob was admitted to Candidacy for the Permanent Diaconate, and on November 17 he will be instituted as a Lector. At that same Mass, John, who is a year ahead in the program, will be instituted as an Acolyte. Both men will be helping at the altar and with the groundbreaking today.

Please remember to vote on Tuesday. Freedom has its privileges and its responsibilities. Know what candidates and their parties stand for, and what they oppose. Make an informed decision, based on factors that include moral values and personal character. Your vote counts – use it this year and every time you can, and use it wisely.

Two Sundays ago, as required annually, we counted all the people who came to Mass Saturday night and Sunday. The counters were primarily members of our Parish Council; one tallied people entering from the back door, one from the two front doors. Each had two clickers to facilitate this responsibility: one to count children up to age 12, another to count all the rest. I saw that they did their job very well – and came up with statistics that are nearly identical to last year's count (probably because there isn't much more room for people to squeeze into the church or the parking lot.)

Here are specific tallies for each of our Masses: Saturday night at 5:30: 238 adults, 89 children; Sunday morning at 7:30: 119 adults, 20 children; Sunday morning at 9:00: 335 adults, 141 children; Sunday morning at 10:30: 246 adults, 130 children; Sunday morning at 12:15: 192 adults, 62 children.

Thus the minimum total population attending church at our five Masses on October 21 and 22 was: 1,572 people.

There were 1,130 adults and 442 children.

Not bad for a church with only 315 seats and 97 parking spaces. And good reason to break ground for a larger building, and to create more seats for both worship and religious education, so that we can welcome as many as will come, to Christ and to his community, the Catholic Church.

Faithfully yours in Christ
Msgr. William Belford