

## PROGRESS ON THE MERGER OF OUR PARISHES

**Intention.** The purpose of this article, and future articles, is to keep St. Paul and St. Felicitas parishioners informed about the actions being taken to effect the merger of our two parishes into one new parish.

**Meeting at the Center for Pastoral Leadership.** On March 25, Bishop Lennon and his staff met with the pastors and leaders of the parishes designated to close or merge. Each pastor/administrator was to bring to the meeting two lay leaders of his parish. Father Ruggeri was accompanied by Lisa Radey and Mike Melfi. Father Jerse was accompanied by Barbara Pallo and Linda McVoy. Each parish represented at this meeting was given a *Consolidation Manual*, a compendium of guidelines, recommendations and suggestions regarding processes and priorities.

**Meeting of Joint Parish Councils.** On March 31, at 7:30 pm, the Parish Pastoral Councils of our two parishes met jointly at St. Felicitas. The meeting was chaired by Father Ruggeri. Present were: Donna Apanasewicz (F), Kathy Brown (P), Mary Chinchar (F), Andrea Dean (F), Dan Drasler (P Chair), Matt Fodor (F), Christine Hainrihar (F), Father Bill Jerse (P), Frank Koballa (F), Beverly Kozitko (P), Linda McVoy (P Vice-chair), Mike Melfi, (F co-chair), David Oligny (P), Barbara Pallo (P), Deacon Lou Pecek (P), Lisa Radey (F), Father Sal Ruggeri (F), Sue Smith (F), Nick Somich (F co-chair), Delores Spada (P), Don Wagner (F)

Council members not attending were: Bill Guhde (P), Father John Juhas (F), John Kitko (F)

Also attending were: Martha Dodd (F School Principal, Pete McVoy (P Finance Council Chair), Robert Patterson (F) and Jackie Caruso-Taylor (P Recording Secretary)

After an opening prayer service, initial discussion concentrated on the need for all parishioners of both parishes to grow into an understanding of what is happening. St. Felicitas is not absorbing St. Paul. St. Paul is not moving over to St. Felicitas. While people are grasping for language to explain the merger, language must avoid condescension and offense. When two or more parishes merge, a completely new parish is formed. The former parishes cease to exist. They lose their canonical identities and form an entirely new parish with a new canonical identity. The emphasis is on the former parishes coming together as equals to form the completely new parish.

**Merger Date:** The first decision to be made was the merger date, because all planning hinges on that date. This date and the dates on which the present parishes will close have to be requested, and the bishop must accept and approve the requests. Because many parishes are going through this same process, it is important that we submit our requests promptly. After discussion, those in attendance unanimously approved the following requests. November 15: Closing of St. Felicitas; November 22: Closing of St. Paul; November 29: Opening of new parish. The opening date chosen is the First Sunday of Advent, the beginning of the new Church year, suitable for the beginning of new life in a new parish. The dates must be approved by the Bishop. We should hear around mid-May.

(Over)