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JMJ

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Happy Feast Day.

Tonight we begin the solemn feast of our patrons, St. Peter and St. Paul. This occasion is filled with both joy and sorrow. The joy is in celebrating the lengthy, colorful history of this faith community. The present moment is the result of the selfless gifts of so many people—most of whom are now in the “communion of saints” in heaven. There is also a certain heavy heartedness among those of us here today: tonight we will witness the final celebration of this Solemnity in the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul.

On June 1, we met here and I outlined the difficulties facing our community. The Pastoral Center could no longer provide a priest for the “fourth Mass” in our unified parish, the insurance and heating (and other) bills have become greatly burdensome. Since our last meeting, we have found a priest for the “fourth Mass” on a weekly basis, sometimes not knowing if this is filled until Saturday afternoon. July and August are traditional vacation months and there will be even fewer priests to contact. I erred in suggesting that we could use the “Sunday Worship in the Absence of a Priest” (Communion Service) ritual. Liturgical norms remind us that when there is no Eucharistic celebration, there is no Church.

Bleak as this picture may seem, there is still an invitation to act in such a way as to stem the hemorrhaging of our resources into the buildings and to set aside resources for the future of ministry in the Bulls Head / West Main section of Rochester. As people of faith, I am asking you to do this: to be proactive rather than fatalistic. Next Sunday we will come together and I will bring two questions. **(1) When will we celebrate our final Sunday Eucharist? (2) When will we celebrate the (larger) closing Mass at St. Peter and St. Paul Church?** As you ponder the first question, remember that after July 30 there will be no priest available. The second question is about the impact of our closing on the larger, greater community (the diocese, the city, the neighborhood, etc.). The experience of Our Lady of Good Counsel and St. Augustine closings have shown that it takes a good six weeks to do all the planning needed for such a celebration. Perhaps in the fall, when the weather is cooler?

This has been a difficult letter to write, and I imagine it is more difficult to read. Yet we are not without hope. In all their trials, in all their joys (and even in their disagreements) both Peter and Paul kept their focus on one person: Jesus Christ, the One who promises to remain with us always, until the end of time.

May God give you peace,

Fr. Raymond H. Fleming

Fr. Raymond H. Fleming, Pastor

Eve of the Solemnity of St. Peter and St. Paul (June 28) 2006

PS Your fellow parishioners and the “new” and unified St. Monica Church continue to hold you in their hearts and prayers; they look forward to the opportunity to welcome each of you into the fuller unity of our new parish.