



Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

Office of the Cardinal

Nov. 8, 2009

Dear Friends in Christ,

As members of Holy Family Parish, the new community established to serve Catholics on Galveston and Bolivar, you are each playing an essential role in the formation, practice and glory of our faith on the island and peninsula. Now united in Christ as one Catholic community, your parish is indeed a hopeful, joyful sign that people of many cultures and languages can share one profession of faith. I am grateful to all of you who have worked to create a unified parish that will be a credible witness to the Catholic renewal happening in the Galveston region.

There is no question that your community has suffered a heavy cross of loss and destruction because of Hurricane Ike. The former parishes that preceded Holy Family were each affected in their own way and to varying degrees. As you have wisely merged together in a more compact way after the storm, it has become evident that we must consolidate the number of facilities now used by Holy Family Parish. Certainly, an understandable sadness accompanies the loss of some buildings that we may have identified with our Catholic faith.

However, we must take the necessary step of removing or selling unoccupied or storm-damaged buildings from the former parish sites that preceded Holy Family. This consolidation will allow the Archdiocese to: increase safety by removing facilities that have been vandalized or broken into since Hurricane Ike; make the best use of the available time of priests, lay ministers and volunteers who serve Holy Family Parish; energize parishioners with larger-scale programs, such as sizeable classes for young people preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation; decrease your parish's exposure to flooding or other catastrophes, should another storm hit the region; lower the parish's operating costs by only maintaining buildings that are actively in use; and eliminate current expenditures for security services at the vacant or storm-damaged buildings.

As recommended by the Archdiocese after consultation with your parish, certain structures at St. Peter the Apostle, Holy Rosary and Sacred Heart will be torn down, and the buildings and lots at Reina de la Paz and the rectory and land at St. Peter the Apostle will be sold.

On Bolivar Peninsula, St. Therese of Lisieux Mission has already been razed due to safety concerns; Our Mother of Mercy church, which has not been in service since Hurricane Ike, will also be removed because it remains vulnerable to future storm damage and would be an onerous expense to the new parish. However, we will build a storm-resistant building at the former St. Therese of Lisieux site. This Catholic Center, which is centrally located on a relatively high plain of Bolivar Peninsula, will be able to accommodate 400 and serve the entire peninsula community.

We anticipate the removal of these facilities to begin this week.

The Archdiocese is committed to restoring St. Mary Cathedral Basilica. As a first step toward renovation, a commercial building adjacent to the church was cleared in September to create additional parking at the Basilica. The Archdiocese treasures the Cathedral Basilica as the mother church of Texas, and with time and funding we will restore it. An initial assessment of the requirements to repair the Basilica has already begun.

As you continue to come together as a parish, I pray that the image of the Holy Family of Nazareth will be a beautiful mirror in which all of you can see yourselves.

Peace,

Daniel Cardinal DiNardo