

To: Father Stephan  
Father Sean  
Stefan Chevalier  
Joe Hershel  
Our Lady of the Assumption Parish Council

January 18, 2016

From: Gary Texter

Subject: Pastoral Assistant's Report

### **Adult Faith Formation**

As I stated in my December Report, we decided to hold off until the New Year to hold the special Sunday evening with a pot luck dinner, viewing, and discussion of *Pope Francis Speaks to America*. After consulting with the team the church calendar and Fr. Sean, I will let you know the new date (looking at Divine Mercy Sunday which has been a time that has worked so well for us in the past.) We will invite all parishioners from our cluster churches to attend.

In addition, as you know, Pope Francis has declared December 8, 2015 thru Nov 20, 2016 as the Jubilee Year of Mercy and Cardinal Dolan has named our own beloved National Shrine of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel as one of 5 locations within the Archdiocese where clergy, religious and lay faithful can obtain the Jubilee Indulgence. Fr. Stephan and I have discussed that there is interest among our parishioners in making a pilgrimage to the National Shrine. I will gather some input from those who have already expressed interest and put together some thoughts on setting aside a day for those parishioners who would like to make a pilgrimage as a community and discuss with Fr Sean and Fr Tom. Our parishioners have enjoyed retreat days in recent past we put together as part of our Christ-life series and before that the days of recollection/reflection we shared at the Shrine.

### **'Making All Things New'**

I have reached out to Jim Brech about bringing the cluster together to put together and sign the document regarding collaboration within the cluster. I feel encouraged because at the Adult faith formation Network meeting I chaired in June at which all 6 cluster churches were represented we were able to discuss collaborating on the Evangelization theme. The Adult Faith Formation Network met again in the fall and discussed it further along with sharing what each has done recently and is planning to do. Mary Donnelly is working on gathering data from all 6 cluster churches regarding energy useage with the hope that might be another area we can all benefit thru collaboration.

The third key area that we are already working well together is on helping the poor. As you know, the Warming Station for the Homeless is now in its 8<sup>th</sup> season. OLA has been on board from when it was still in planning stages and all cluster churches are or have been involved. There are also other initiatives our churches are doing including serving the poor thru our food pantries, volunteering at soup kitchen etc.

### **Ecumenical Outreach**

The Warming Station for the homeless opened Sunday Nov 15 after a prayer service hosted by the Greater Middletown Interfaith Council. To date we have served more than 100 different guests averaging around 25 per night. There have been several nights we hit our capacity of 30 guests and one night 3 guests had to be relocated to HONOR so as not to go over our legal limit of 30. Many thanks to generous parishioners of OLA who have donated supplies and have stayed as overnight volunteers. Thanks also to our sister Carmelite churches that are active in sending volunteers and to those who have donated supplies. As you know thru its *Soctober promotion Mt Carmel* donated 1600 pr of socks to get us off the ground and recently a large supply of Hot Chocolate was collected by Mt Carmel School children. Our last training for those who wish to be overnight volunteers this season is Feb 3<sup>rd</sup>. Thank you also to Fr Anthony serving as an overnight volunteer.

The Tri County Action Committee, Helping the Homeless To Thrive, Not Just Survive, a faith based group consisting of clergy and friends continues to meet monthly and there are points of light –rays of hope coming out of it –The new Warming Station in Monroe opened at Sacred Heart in Monroe is now operating. Port Jervis has opened a Warming Station, HONOR (Helping Others Needing Our Resources) continues to seek funding for an outreach van that among other things will stop at houses of worship at their invitation to outreach to the homeless and others who have limited or no resources, and other positives continue to happen. The Warming Station has opened and is now operating in Newburgh as well.

### **Eucharistic Ministers**

I am told that some of our ministers are away for winter and that is making it difficult to provide adequate coverage especially for 5:30 and 10:30 Masses. I will discuss this with Fr Sean and relay conversations last year with both Deans (Orange and Sullivan County)

I would like to end my report by saying I have learned and grown in the faith by working with Fr. Stephan, as I have with each of our Priests over the years. I know you join me in wishing him all the best on the 5 month Sabbatical. May God bless him always.

God bless you all,  
Gary