



ST. MICHAEL CHURCH

40 ALDEN STREET • CRANFORD, NEW JERSEY 07016 • (908) 276-0360

Lent, 2014

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

The beginning of February marked the mid-point of my current 6-year term as Pastor of St. Michael Parish. On becoming Pastor in 2011, I felt that a major obligation was to look ahead to 2022 - now only eight years away - when our parish will observe its 150th anniversary. I felt that approaching milestone invited us to examine our life as a parish family, to see how St. Michael's can continue to fulfill its mission faithfully, in a culture that is changing rapidly, challenging ways in which Catholics have traditionally connected with the Church. Disciples of Jesus by virtue of our Baptism, we share in common a responsibility to proclaim His Gospel as stewards of God's gifts, through effective ministries of the Word, Worship and Service, strengthening our parish family and reaching out to the broader community, especially those in need. After several open speak-up sessions, I asked a group of parishioners to serve as a Steering Committee for Parish Transformation, to consider how we might address the demands of our mission now and in the future.

Meeting regularly, the Steering Committee has been aided by your responses to the Survey conducted in May 2012, which indicated general satisfaction with many aspects of parish life and also suggested areas in which we might improve our services and increase parishioners' involvement in various ministries and activities. The Steering Committee has pursued initiatives to upgrade parish communication and foster a stronger sense of community among us, and I thank Committee members for the time and effort they have devoted to their task. The Steering Committee will continue to function for the foreseeable future, but it is time now to establish a more formal body for consultation on matters affecting parish life at St. Michael's.

Accordingly, I am re-instituting a **Parish Pastoral Council** to help maintain our focus on fulfilling our mission as a Catholic parish. The change in name, from 'Parish Council' to 'Parish Pastoral Council', is meant to highlight the duty we have to live our Faith with integrity; to pass it on to others, especially our children and youth; to nurture our spiritual lives through prayer and the celebration of the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist; and to open our hearts and hands to welcome and serve all who look to us for signs of God's love. The Parish Pastoral Council will join the Parish Finance Council (mandated by Church law to help administer the parish's material resources) as a primary vehicle to assist me in my duties as Pastor.

Please find on the reverse a fact-sheet describing how the Pastoral Council will be formed and how it will function; please review this material and give it your prayerful consideration. Also enclosed is a form for submitting names of those you would like to propose for designation as members of this new Council. I encourage you to consider submitting your own name as well. It is my hope that the Pastoral Council will reflect the diversity of our parish family and represent a healthy variety of views on how St. Michael's can faithfully fulfill its mission in a culture that is rapidly changing, challenging ways in which Catholics have traditionally connected with their Church. With your participation, in the coming months we will identify candidates and conduct a process of selection and orientation of Council members. I hope to convene the Pastoral Council this September; so the deadline for submitting nominees is June 1. Nomination forms may be placed in the Sunday collection basket or returned to the Parish Center by mail or in person.

As we look to Easter, please join me in asking God's blessing on this important endeavor, and the prayers of Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church. St. Michael's is a strong parish in so many ways: as we go forward in faith, *Alive as the Body of Christ*, let us renew our commitment to help assure it continues to serve as a vibrant source of support for the witness we are called to give to Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

God love you!

Msgr. Timothy J. Shugrue, Pastor

What is a Parish Pastoral Council?

Simply put, a Parish Pastoral Council is a group of individuals chosen to represent the needs of their parish and community to their Pastor. In doing so, these individuals must keep in mind the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.

St. Michael Parish Pastoral Council Mission Statement

The purpose of the St. Michael Parish Pastoral Council is to insure that the life of the Parish reflects the mission of Jesus Christ and that parishioners are provided with opportunities to share in that mission. This is done by a true collaboration of the Faithful with the pastoral leadership of St. Michael Parish.

Some objectives of the Parish Pastoral Council would be:

- To develop a common vision and/or direction for the Parish community
- To discern the needs of the community and work toward developing a plan to meet those needs
- To promote and encourage an atmosphere that allows all parishioners to contribute
- To articulate the Parish vision and keep it alive through the establishment, coordination and continuing evaluation of the various ministries, programs and activities needed to assure its realization

Why a Pastoral Council?

St. Michael Parish has had a long history of very strong and effective lay participation in various advisory groups. For many reasons, a Pastoral Council has not been active for some time. Msgr. Shugrue wishes to re-establish a Pastoral Council in St. Michael Parish and looks forward to working closely with the group of parishioners and hopes that they will be truly able to represent the needs and concerns of both their fellow parishioners and the larger community. It is Monsignor's hope to have this Council work together with him to carry out the mission of Christ and the Church effectively in this local setting.

Who would make a good Parish Pastoral Council member?

We are looking for a group of no more than 15 persons to represent the broad spectrum of members of St. Michael Parish. We would like to see representation be:

- Both male and female
- Younger and older
- Married and Single, Widow and Widower
- Religious Education participants and St. Michael School participants
- Recent member and Long-standing member

Persons chosen for the Parish Pastoral Council should be:

- Fully-initiated (Baptized and Confirmed) and Active members of the Roman Catholic Church
- Attend Mass at St. Michael regularly and be registered members
- Reflect the face of the Parish and its experiences

What is the commitment?

- Term is 3 years, non-binding
- Meetings are monthly from September-June
- Meeting length is no longer than 1 ½ hours

Time Line

- Nominations accepted until June 1, 2014
- Information Meeting for interested parishioners and nominees will take place on June 18
- Parish Pastoral Council will be selected by June 30