

Saint Maria Goretti & Our Lady of the Angels Parishes
Spiritual Retreat III – January 6, 2022 – 6:30pm in Saint Joseph Church

Highlights from Bishop Zubik's Homiletic Reflection

- Gathering on the Feast of the Epiphany, Bishop Zubik reminded us of the Three Wise Men and their search for the Messiah. They did not allow anything or anyone to get in their way and they were united in their effort to find the Newborn King. After finding him in Bethlehem, the Magi took a different path and did not return to King Herod.
- Bishop Zubik uses the story of the Magi to better illustrate the underlying reason and foundation for *On Mission For The Church Alive!* – to search for Jesus in our daily life. As the Shepherd of the local Church of Pittsburgh, Bishop Zubik invites everyone to enter into a closer relationship with Jesus and with one another. Despite many other important issues such as a population decrease, financial struggles, and shrinking clergy numbers, our main goal is to seek a much deeper relationship with the Lord and one another.
- Bishop Zubik reminded us that the essential issue at hand in all of this is how we are “to be Church” in our diocese, in our parishes, and in our personal lives: (1) to bring everyone closer to Jesus. (2) to bring everyone closer together as brother and sisters in Christ. (3) to treat others as if they are Christ and to treat others as if I am Christ. (4) to have the mind and heart of Christ in all things.
- In his second part of the homily, Bishop Zubik spoke about “Three Wise Guys” who have influenced his priestly and episcopal ministry, and his formation of the *On Mission For The Church Alive!* initiative in our diocese: Pope St. John XXIII (1958-1963), Pope St. John Paul II (1978-2005), and Pope Francis (2013-present).
- These three Popes have provided living examples of three characteristics which serve as an example of how we are called to be Church, whether in our diocese, parishes, or personal lives: Pope St. John XXIII gave us *Collaboration*; Pope St. John Paul II gave us *Courage*; and Pope Francis gives us *Compassion*.
- *Collaboration* is the art of working together. It involves listening to each other and bringing people together in the name of Jesus. Pope St. John XXIII’s greatest expression of this characteristic was the Second Vatican Council. Being a true pastor at heart, he listened to and reached out to his people. We are called to do the same.
- *Courage* is found in standing up for the Truth found in Jesus and in the Church. Pope St. John Paul II’s greatest expression of this characteristic was how he stood up against Communism and fostered the boldness of his faith in Christ.
- *Compassion* is having the heart of Jesus and treating others with love and mercy. We clearly see Pope Francis’ compassion for the sick, the poor, the lonely, and the neglected in the world. He calls us to treat others with genuine, Christ-like love and mercy.
- In his third part of the homily, Bishop Zubik spoke about *On Mission* in relation to Grouping #113, which encompasses Bloomfield, Garfield, and Lawrenceville. These three neighborhoods have been and continue to be a vital part of the Church in Pittsburgh. They are a representation of the rich diversity found throughout our six-county diocese.
- Bishop Zubik recalled the founding dates of our parishes: St. Augustine (1863), St. Joseph (1872), the former St. Lawrence O’Toole (1897), Immaculate Conception (1905), and St. Maria Goretti (2012).
- The Bishop was very honest in stating that the *On Mission* initiative has faced some significant challenges in Bloomfield, especially at St. Maria Goretti Parish. He cited the hundreds of emails and letters addressed directly to him, and in his meetings with the SMG Council members, and in

past Parish Assemblies. In all of these, there has been one issue continually discussed: buildings, that is, will he choose St. Joseph Church or Immaculate Conception Church?

- The Bishop noted that this issue has caused many to cross a line, often disrespecting others verbally in meetings and in the countless letters and emails he has received.
- Bishop Zubik noted the need to overcome this disunity in order to build unity in our parishes. He referred to the Three C's of the previously mentioned popes: *Collaboration*, *Courage*, and *Compassion*.
- *Collaboration* calls us to look beyond the current buildings. We are called to look for ways to weed out attitudes, opinions, and initiatives that betray what it means to be Church. *Courage* calls us to be willing to compromise and to see beyond "my way". There is a nearly unanimous recognition that St. Maria Goretti Parish cannot afford both campuses. The greater need is to seek to preserve both the spiritual and physical presence of the Church in Bloomfield, regardless of which campus is selected. *Compassion* is the need to lose sight of the forest for the trees. We cannot put the work of the Church on the back burner. We must help each other to deepen our relationship with Christ and work with each other to deepen our bonds as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- In his fourth and final part of the homily, Bishop Zubik spoke about the timeline related to the *On Mission* initiative at St. Maria Goretti Parish:
 - The diocese has contracted with a Detroit-based company to complete an independent facilities study of the Immaculate Conception and St. Joseph Campuses. This study will evaluate immediate building needs and associated costs as well as long-term building needs and costs. This report is anticipated to be completed by January 17, 2022.
 - A Parish Assembly will be held by the end of January in order to discuss the results of the facilities report and to present the latest financials of St. Maria Goretti Parish. Parishioners will be able to provide feedback. The date and location of this Assembly are forthcoming.
 - Following the Parish Assembly and review of feedback from the parishioners, members of the Parish Advisory Council, the Parish Finance Council, and the Parish Task Force will meet with Bro. John to give their best advice regarding the facilities report and updated financials.
 - Bro. John will then consider the facts from the facilities report, the financials report, feedback from the Parish Assembly, and the input from the Advisory Councils and the Task Force. Bro. John will then make his formal recommendation to Bishop Zubik. The formal petition to close a particular campus is to be submitted to Bishop Zubik no later than February 11, 2022.
 - As per the directives of Canon Law, Bishop Zubik will present the petition to the Diocesan Presbyteral Council on February 17, 2022 for their vote. Following this meeting, as per Canon Law, Bishop Zubik will consult the Vicars General (Bishop Waltersheid, Bishop Eckman, Fr. DiNardo) for their input.
 - Bishop Zubik will then make his decision by the end of February.
 - If, by chance, there is a delay in the facilities report, Bishop Zubik will move the presentation of the formal petition to the April 7 meeting of the Presbyteral Council and his decision will be released after Easter. This will also affect Parish Assembly dates and Council Meetings.
 - The official Merger Process will begin in June 2022 in anticipation of the merger of St. Maria Goretti Parish and Our Lady of the Angels Parish in January 2023.