

Our Lady of the Valley Parish



**Bishop Rozanski's
Parish Visitation Report
April 24, 2018**

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The Bishop's Parish Visitation

The purpose of a parish visitation is to help me be better aware of the situations and challenges facing the parishes and missions of the Diocese of Springfield. The visit also allows me the opportunity to provide guidance, encouragement, assistance and direction to support the ongoing effectiveness of ministry in and among the parishes of the diocese. Finally, a pastoral visit affords me a way to appreciate and affirm the abundant, ongoing grace of God evident in the faith and witness of the Church in the communities of the Diocese of Springfield.

With these purposes in mind, I thank your pastor, Fr. McGonagle, Fr. Gawinowski, the parish staff; councils and committees, and all involved with this visit for their consideration and cooperation with me and members of the diocesan staff.

Introduction

Our Lady of the Valley Parish is a Roman Catholic Church serving the needs of Easthampton, Southampton, Westhampton and surrounding towns. The parish established in 2010 was formed by combining the three parishes in Easthampton; Immaculate Conception, Notre Dame du Bon Counsel and Sacred Heart of Jesus. The campus is made up of 3 former Easthampton parishes, Immaculate Conception, Sacred Heart and Notre Dame.

The Immaculate Conception site has a church (the worship site for Our Lady of the Valley), a rectory, three car garage and former school building. The Sacred Heart site has a church, rectory, convent, former school and pavilion. The Notre Dame site has a church (serves as diocesan Patrimony Center), rectory, two car garage, a former elementary school building, an active pre-school building and a storage building. They also have two cemeteries St. Brigid and St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr.

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The three communities have melded well while still respecting their various traditions.

Given the energy and activity I observed, I make the following commendations and recommendations to guide and support the pastor and staff of Our Lady of the Valley Parish in your efforts to work together to extend the presence and power of God's love. I recognize the good work done here and invite you to reflect with me as I review with you my observations from this pastoral visit.

Commendations

Pastor

1. I commend Fr. McGonagle for his ministry, beginning on July 1, 2010 in bringing together the parishes of Easthampton under the title of Our Lady of the Valley.
2. I commend Fr. McGonagle for working with the parishioners of Our Lady of the Valley to restore the church to its beauty with the recent renovations and painting, including the refurbishing of the Stations of the Cross.
3. I commend Fr. McGonagle in maintaining the campuses of Our Lady of the Valley in fine shape.
4. I commend Fr. McGonagle in helping the parish to achieve a singular identity and in fostering the various outreach ministries, both local and well beyond our area. In particular, I am grateful that Bethlehem House, a much needed ministry in our area, has found a home in the former Sacred Heart rectory.

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5. I commend Fr. McGonagle in working with the staff to insure proper communications and expectations in serving the people of the parish.
6. I commend both Frs. McGonagle and Gawinowski for the 5:30 PM Mass on Sunday evenings that serve the parishioners of Our Lady of the Valley and beyond for weekly worship.
7. I commend Fr. McGonagle for keeping up the ethnic traditions of the three parishes to share the beauty of the traditions for all in the parish.

Fr. John Gawinowski

1. I commend Fr. Gawinowski for his pastoral presence to the homebound, adult education and youth religious education programs.
2. I commend Fr. Gawinowski in his good working relationship with Fr. McGonagle and the staff in serving the parishioners of Our Lady of the Valley.

Staff

1. I commend the Carol, Karen and Chris for their commitment to the many ministries of the parish.
2. I commend Carol for her work both with the Faith Formation Program and the cemetery.
3. I commend Karen for her work on the bulletin
4. I commend Chris for her support of the Day Care Center.
5. I commend the spirit of working together which makes the load easier.

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6. I commend the parish staff for the wonderful web site.
7. I commend the parish staff for the televised Mass made available to the home bound.
8. I commend the parish staff for their support of Bethlehem House.
9. I commend the parish staff for their support of the Day Care Center.

Faith Formation

1. I commend Caroline Growhoski for her service to the Faith Formation Program.
2. I commend the parish for connecting the First Communion students with the life of the parish through the making and distribution of pretzels for the Holy Thursday liturgy.

Child and Youth Protection

1. I commend Carol Growowski for her attention to detail and her skills in the Safe Environment program for adults and for students.
2. I commend Carol for reaching out to share some child advocate responsibilities with a capable parish volunteer.
3. I commend the parish for committing to proving *Virtus* training.
4. I commend the directors and staff of Our Lady's Child Care in their compliance with the EEC standards that also meet the standards for a Safe Environment Program.

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Finance Team

1. I commend the parish finance team for their faithful service to the parish.
2. I commend the parish finance team for rotating members.
3. I commend the finance team for keeping the minutes of their meetings in fine order.

Pastoral Council

1. I commend the parish council for supporting the many ministries alive in the parish.
2. Out of respect for the fine outreach present in this parish I would like to commend all the volunteers who make it possible and list the ministries (please forgive me if I miss any) Take and Eat, Bethlehem House, Blessed Sacrament Support Group, Cot Shelter, and Various Choirs.
3. I also wish to commend all of the groups that make this all possible the Knights of Columbus , Woman's Club, Bible Study and televised Sunday Mass.

Maintenance

1. I commend Kevin for keeping all the required inspections up to date and keeping the structures as well maintained as he can with the budget constraints he has.

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Recommendations

It is clear that Our Lady of the Valley Parish is a unique community trying to be faithful to its mission. In light of the learning from the visit, the following recommendations are offered to the parish leadership. I suggest that you continue to dialogue with your pastor as you consider these areas for thought and action. Of course, my office and all the diocesan offices continue to be available to the parish for support and cooperation in your ministry.

Please consider the following areas for your ongoing planning and ministry development.

Pastor

1. I recommend that Fr. McGonagle work with the Finance Committee, the Pastoral Council and the parishioners of Our Lady of the Valley to address the operating budget of the parish.
2. I recommend that Fr. McGonagle work with the Pastoral Council and the diocese to address the issue of the unused buildings of the parish.
3. I recommend that more lectors and Eucharistic ministers be added with a preference for younger people.

Fr. Gawinowski

1. I recommend that Fr. Gawinowski work along with Fr. McGonagle and the staff to reach out to the 35 – 50 year olds in the neighborhood to invite them to participate more fully in the life of the parish.

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Parish Staff

1. I recommend that the parish staff continue to work together to provide support for the parish programs.

Faith Formation

1. I recommend that a Formal Faith Formation board be created to help the parish develop lifelong faith formation within the parish community.
2. I recommend that the parish continue to find ways to reach out to parents and families, offering them ongoing opportunities to enrich their own faith.
3. I recommend that the parish provide for and encourage catechists to participate in ongoing catechetical formation opportunities offered by the diocese.
4. I recommend that the parish offer all of the young people more service opportunities that flow from the on-going social outreach ministry of the parish. This will allow young people to recognize the connection between Eucharist and service.
5. We recommend that the parish work to create opportunities for youth and young adults to gather and be involved in the life of the parish after Confirmation. The Office of Faith Formation is available to offer support, guidance and formation opportunities for developing youth/young adult ministry leaders in the parish. This can be done collaboratively with other area parishes as well.

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Child and Youth Protection

1. I recommend that the parish consider doing a live training for parishioners who do not wish or have access to do an on-line training, and that Josette be trained to facilitate *Virtus* live trainings.
2. I recommend that Perri Taylor, Director of Our Lady's Child Care, provide certain documentation annually to Carol to be included in the documentation for the annual Charter for the Protection of Children audit. This would include a master list of OLCC personnel and evidence that each person is up to date with necessary training.

Finance Team

1. I recommend that the finance team continue their efforts to find a buyer for unused parish property.
2. I recommend that the finance team work with the priests and other parish organizations to address the issue of increased revenue.

Pastoral Council

1. I recommend that the parish council continue their efforts to support and encourage ministers for all members of the parish.
2. I recommend that the parish council work with the priests of the parish to encourage younger members of the parish to be more involved.

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Finally, I thank all who have cooperated in this visitation process. I feel very encouraged by the faith and energy I discovered at Our Lady of the Valley Parish and I look forward to working with you for the glory of God and the benefit of all the people off your area. Be assured of my prayers for all involved in your parish as you work together into the future on your faith mission,

Sincerely,

+Mitchell T. Rozanski
Bishop of Springfield