

Saint Benedict's and Saint Kevin's: *Journeying Together in Faith*

April 23, 2017—The year was 1913 when Rt Rev. Matthew Harkins, the Bishop of Providence, seeing the population move from Providence to rural areas around the state, decided to establish a parish in the Town of Warwick. This new parish was named Saint Benedict's and it was the first parish in the area. With just a few families living there year-round, most being summer residents, efforts began to build a church and to grow a parish. The hard work and sturdy efforts of these first parishioners worked since, more than a 100 years later, Saint Benedict Parish is still open for business. But, as we all experience in our own lives, things change and so for the past several years and for various reasons, including changing demographics, a diminishing population in Warwick, fewer priests being ordained and available for parochial ministry, the pastors of Warwick and select parishioners have been in active discussions about the future. Along with the changes all of our local parishes are experiencing, there will also be many changes in all diocesan parishes as the situation evolves.

Several years ago, I was approached by Fr. Roland Simoneau, the Pastor of Saint Benedict's, our neighboring parish, about the possibility of joining the two parishes on the occasion on his retirement in July of this year. Since then, we have sponsored programs together, among them our Lenten Mission, the Seder Supper, and various social events, to try out this process. As you know, we have been successful, and after much study and discussion with our Trustees, Finance Councils, parish, and diocesan leaders, a proposal was made to Bishop Tobin, to **yoke** our parishes in what will be a very open process. Yoking our parishes means that I will become pastor of both parishes. Fr. Simoneau's intention is to be sure that St. Benedict church and parish remain open as a place for worship, and social and spiritual events.

The Mass schedules will be adjusted to accommodate one priest assigned to both parishes. Further, Fr. Simoneau, living nearby, will continue to be available for the foreseeable future to assist with Masses, funerals, and other events. We believe it is a good and solid plan for the future of both parishes.

In reality, as what so often happens in life, the aging and elderly parent, Saint Benedict's, will be taken in by the grateful child, St. Kevin's. We have so much to offer each other and, by combining our efforts and working together, we will be ensuring the spiritual health and growth of both parishes. St. Benedict's and St. Kevin's parishes are in good financial shape: our buildings are sound, our staffs dedicated and hard-working. However, as you can see by the numbers each year, while St. Kevin's is growing, with over 100 baptisms, 41 Confirmations, and 50 First Communions, St. Benedict's is slowly diminishing. St. Benedict's only had 28 funerals, eight baptisms, five First Communions, and nine Confirmations, and, with weekly collections diminishing due to a smaller giving congregation, it is time to be proactive and to make the changes necessary to keep their doors open.

This Tuesday night (April 25) at 6:30 in Saint Benedict's parish hall (located on the lower level of the school), a joint meeting of both parishes will be held. We have entitled this meeting and the entire process, *"Journeying Together in Faith."* All are welcome to join us as we answer questions and ask for your suggestions toward making the future of both Saint Benedict's and Saint Kevin's parishes as bright as in the past.

Many thanks for your cooperation and prayers, and may God Bless you, your families, and our parishes.