

# **ST. MARY'S CHURCH**

224 FRANKLIN STREET  
ELMIRA, NY 14904

August 21, 2009

## Parishioners

A word of greeting from St. Mary's Southside. On June 30, 2009 I became the new pastor of St. Mary's Church. After 31 years of priesthood it is nice to return to my hometown of Elmira. I grew up in St. Anthony's Parish and I look forward to serving here at St. Mary's.

I have received a warm welcome from so many of you in person. Of course, with summer vacations many of you may have been away. Others of you may be unable to make it to church for health reasons. I would like to take this opportunity to reach out to you. If there is some way that I or the parish can be of assistance such as Communion or pastoral visits please let us know.

St. Mary's is a parish of 1,100 families and has a long history dating back to 1872. It is a history of serving you in your spiritual needs and a history that I wish to continue. If any of you would like to discuss any questions or concerns I would be happy to meet with you. The parish exists for you, to help you grow in your personal relationship with God.

We are also mindful of the number of people who have drifted away from the Church. People drift away from the church for various reasons. Some may feel that they have been wronged by the church. Others may disagree with the teachings of the church. Others simply stop coming because they do not feel like they get anything out of church or that the church that they grow up with is irrelevant in today's world.

The church is still relevant today. But our world, with technological advancements, is changing faster than we can adapt. We need to adapt our understanding of the world but the gospel message is a constant. The challenge before the church is to help us understand how the gospel is still relevant today.

Mindful of the people who have drifted away from the Church, the parish has been developing a new program to reach out to those who have drifted away from the church. We also realize that there are people who come to church regularly but who may not know much about the Catholic Church, maybe they do not understand what happens in the various parts of the Mass.

**In light of this, we would like to have an evening gathering for “inactive Catholics.” Our first opportunity for this will be on Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. in the lower level of the rectory.** If you are one of our inactive Catholics we invite you to join us. Or perhaps you know someone in our parish that is an inactive Catholic. Consider inviting them to this session. There is no obligation to attend church with this. On this first evening, Fr. Jeff and one of our parishioners will share their stories of being away from the church, what drew them back to church, and what it has been like coming back.

I would like to emphasize that this evening of gathering is intended for people who have been baptized, attended religion classes, and received Confirmation. *I would also mention that the Church offers a wonderful process for those wishing to become Catholic.* It is intended for those not baptized OR baptized in another faith OR baptized Catholic but never instructed in our faith. This process, called Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) begins *Sunday, September 20<sup>th</sup>*. Anyone interested in finding out more should contact its coordinator David Biviano at 733-5254.

**If you are interested in attending our evening gathering  
Please join us on  
Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>  
7 p.m. in the rectory**

If you would like to meet with Fr. Jeff or myself, or any of the staff know we are always willing to meet with you to discuss any concerns you may have.

Peace,

Fr. John DeSocio  
Pastor