



# St. Mary Catholic Church

## Our Lady of the Woods Shrine

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October 20, 2024

Dear Parish Member,

My name is Jim Lemerand. I am writing this letter to make the Parish and Visitors aware that we will soon be entering the final phase of the Restoration Project when we replace the patio stones on the front of the structure.

My involvement started on a golf course in a match with Richard Valley, the Shrine Director at the time. He asked for help. It was quickly learned that Father San wanted to do some restoration of the Shrine. The first meeting occurred in October, 2014 with a hand-picked committee. At that meeting it was decided to ask the Parish Family if there was an interest.

The Parish Family attended a meeting in the parish hall with a Professional Restorer and decided to move forward. A search for an architect was next to determine the problems and what will be the cost.

Mike Kirk of Neumann Smith Architectural Firm from Detroit was hired to evaluate the Shrine. Months later Mike Kirk gave his presentation on his findings and cost. Everybody gasped, because the cost went over a million dollars, depending on the length of time to complete. Mr. Kirk provided a written report and answered all questions. After this meeting, the Parish Family still wanted to move forward.

Permission from Bishop Raica was required and received. Additional approval letters were required as the project moved from phase to phase. A Diocese Directive stated that the Parish had to open a separate account specifically for the Restoration. The account was opened with a \$5.00 donation.

History on the Shrine found that the Shrine was considered a David vs. Goliath project in 1953. The current restoration fit that description today. History stated that it was started without a penny and two borrowed shovels. We had the shovels plus five dollars. In the 50's there was much concern about where will the money come from and the same problem occurred today sixty some years later.

The Parish Family and visitors have risen to the occasion time and time again and moved the Restoration farther than many thought were possible. Here is a summary of the Restoration and costs:

October, 2014	<b>Restoration Committee formed</b>	2015-2024 money raised and spent
TOTALS	Architect	\$ 15,095.00
	Statues	\$ 79,273.00
	Structure	\$730,857.00
	Gift Shop Funding	\$ 10,000.00
	Billboards	\$ 500.00
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	<b>Paid in Full</b>	<b>\$835,725.00</b>

To restore the Shrine to its original beauty has not been cheap or easy. Just like in the original construction in the 1950's, we found a way. This was a tremendous accomplishment for a small parish like St. Mary. One visitor said "what has been accomplished here at the Shrine is a Miracle, in itself." I personally believe it does not get this far without Divine Intervention.

We can now see the light at the end of the tunnel. 100% of the statues have been restored. The stone structure has been completely finished front, back and sealed. One more major task remains, which is the Patio stones at the front of the Shrine. We are waiting for an exact cost of this repair. To finish the patio is going to be a very expensive undertaking, maybe the most COSTLY of any accomplished in one year thus far.

I AM ASKING THE PARISH TO COME TO THE PLATE AND HIT A HOME RUN. I AM ASKING FOR EVERYBODY TO REACH DOWN AND DONATE, MAKING A DONATION THAT IS A TRUE SACRIFICE. However much you donate please do it **out of love of the shrine** and not because you have to. Your donation will help bring more people to God and your Church Family. How much would you do for God and your family?

Has the Church been ignored? That answer is emphatically **NO**. The Church and Madonna Hall had new metal roofs installed, kitchen area improvements, the confessional re-designed, and new windows on the rectory. We have met our CSA goal every year plus all the other requests for charitable work that is requested in either second collections or food stuffs.

National Shrine application soon will be given to Bishop Walsh at the Diocese to start the process. To be honest, I cannot imagine too many applications that are 69 years old and have annual visitations of visitors that compare to ours. This is a wait and see, though. If we can become a National Shrine, can you imagine how many more people will be brought to God through the Our Lady of the Woods Marian Shrine.

How was this accomplished for the Shrine as well as the Church? **LOVE and God's help!** We should have great pride that God has entrusted us as stewards of the Shrine. So with that thought let's get this done!

Please make all donations to Our Lady of the Woods Shrine Restoration and mail to St. Mary's Catholic Church, address listed above.

God Bless! Jim Lemerand