

Bishop Milan,

Glory to Jesus Christ! It has come to my attention that there is talk of selling the Cathedral complex, at least the majority of it. As an involved parishioner of St. John's for 50 years and a deacon for the last seven, I am one of the few people that completely understand the situation there and can honestly and knowingly provide my input on it. I am humbly submitting my thoughts on the subject, in part because I do not think they are being presented to you. My goal is not to cause trouble or arguments, but to offer ideas of what might be done with the Cathedral Center as I am not sure all sides have been considered.

History

Fr. Stephen Gulyassy, the pastor of St. John's Church on 22nd and Scollvill Avenue in Cleveland, had a vision of expansion that included purchasing property in Parma, OH. The old "St. John's Grove" was present at the time and you can still see the end of its driveway off of Broadview Road. A new church and grade school were built as our old church on Scovill was standing in the way of Cleveland's expansion of the freeway system in that area. Soon the school was expanded into a high school and included additions such as the gym and library. Unfortunately, for many reasons that no one person really knows, it was decided to close Byzantine High School. At that time, those in charge told the people at St. John's that they would work to utilize the building. Except for the vision of the late Bishop Emil Mihalik creating the chancery in the old east wing, utilizing the building to its fullest potential has never happened.



Current State

The building is not new anymore, but in many ways is in better shape than it was many years ago. Before Fr. Mike arrived, there was about two years after our custodian Paul left that we had no one doing maintenance on the building. Mike Caithaml was hired and has done quite a bit to improve the building. It is, however, more than a one man job. Mike has been doing the work of two men (Paul the former custodian and Charlie Lizanich who did misc building maintenance for Bishop Pataki) plus handling rentals that Charlie and Paul never did.

Ever since the high school and church occupied the same complex, there has always been a misunderstanding of who owns what and who is responsible for what. When the high school was there, the school cafeteria had a sign in it – "St. John's Hall." A cute name in honor of the attached church, but not indicative of ownership as it was not the church's hall. It was "Byzantine High" not "St. John's High School." The parish was a separate entity even though it shared the building. (btw, that sign is in the back room across from the St. Nicholas room). Since the high school closed in 1975, the confusion continued, with the agreement that the gas and electric utilities would be paid for by the Chancery. This changed with Bishop Kudrick who said the Cathedral parish had to share the expenses 50/50. This of course put a new financial burden on the parish and we had to focus much more on raising revenue – something we never had to do in the past. The Cathedral parish had always enjoyed a healthy bank account, spending \$1.5 million on a church renovation in 1982. Overall, while the bulk of the complex was not St. John's, it was the efforts of their Parish Council and parishioners that has done the most in the way of improvements. While the complex is often used for Eparchial events, the bulk of the cost for hosting those events and repairing the associated damage has always fallen on the parish, not the Eparchy. Never has the Eparchy made any effort to utilize the building to raise revenue.

Loss of Acreage

Sadly, back in the days of the sexual abuse scandal of the late 80's early 90's, acres of the Cathedral land were sold to compensate for lawsuits due to the failure and sins of others. It is ironic that we are once again the first one on the list when the idea of selling our land comes up. While suffering for the sins of others is exactly what Jesus Christ did for us, we have to wonder about the potential that the Cathedral Complex has to raise revenue as opposed to other Parma Eparchy churches that do not. With the price per acre that the city of Parma estimated (example 2 below) and the asbestos concern below, I am curious as to just how much we might even make on the sale of this property. While the land could be developed, there are recent developments right across the street that are still vacant for years after being built.

Asbestos Concern

Asbestos in the 50s and 60s was quite common and while we have contained it and have lived with it in its current state since the 1980's, I am not so sure new buyers would be as comfortable knowing how much is present. My conservative estimate of the amount of asbestos in the building is 30,000 square feet and might cost about half a million to abate. This is never a selling point for a building with how people fear this substance and for the fact that it would cost hundreds of thousands to have it properly removed, not to mention re-insulating the scalloped ceiling after it is removed.

Revenue and Complex Potential – 2005 Presentation to Bishop John

Back in 2005, I put on a presentation (I have this in electronic form) to Bishop John showing him the potential that the building had to create revenue. Our complex was and remains unique in its ability to do so. Our complex lies in the heart of a city that is still vibrant. Contrast that to a parish such as St. Eugene's. They have a great facility and beautiful grounds that is probably worth a good amount of money. However, they are surrounded by neighborhoods to which we do not minister (although we could). No one that attends our churches lives there anymore and they are doing very poorly financially. In contrast, the Cathedral parish is paying its bills, its 10% to the Chancery and blowing away its Stewardship pledge.

Mineral Rights

At the same time we were trying to get the complex alive again, we had Bass energy speak with us about the possibility of having a gas/oil well on our property. This company had drilled and found natural gas on the property where I work. Not only do you get your own gas, but are paid a royalty. We were very close to signing a deal during the time when gas was quite high, only to have the deal mysteriously fall through all of the sudden. The man whom I spoke with from Bass Energy would not tell me why, but someone with authority had backed out at the last minute. St. Joseph's in Brecksville, however, does have a gas well and Deacon William worked with Gonz Oil and our Parish Council to get this project going again. We were successful in getting a signing bonus and drilling was about to start, but just at that time, gas prices plummeted and Gonz Oil did not think it was worth their up-front costs and never drilled. Please note – had we continued our efforts with Bass Energy when gas was high, we would have had our own gas and royalties, but instead we chose to live by fear and backed out and by the time we did it again it was too late. We do however, have an agreement with surrounding properties should gas go up again. We needed to involve them in order to get the required 20 acres of land needed to drill.

Caterer and New Bathrooms

In the same time period as my presentation to the bishop, Joe Verba, a Byzantine High grad, long time member of St. Gregory Byzantine Catholic Church in Lakewood, was working with us on the possibility to become our resident caterer, especially since his son the chef had graduated and was looking for work. Joe was (and still is) running Woodside Catering (in St. Michael's Russian Orthodox Church) as well as other businesses and doing very well. I took him on a tour of the place and he recommended what needed to be done in the upstairs hall to get it up to date. He offered to help pay for some of these renovations with his own money. Our Parish Council agreed that we wanted to first fix up the upstairs and downstairs bathrooms, which still looked like they did when the high school was here. We then had Nick Loya and Eikona Studios put together such a proposal. Everyone was in agreement except Bishop John, who did not agree with the investment and it was decided to go with "Plan B" of bathroom renovation, specifically Mick Caithaml doing the work at a reduced cost, but of course ending up not looking like what Eikona would have done. Resistance to a potential 7 figure-making caterer came in the way of questions like "What about the competition?" and pointing out that the upstairs hall had large AC units that did not look nice. Note that the "competition" (Pokrova) came to our place, posing as a potential customer, trying to see what competition we were for them! They realize that we have the location, the larger halls and the property. Unfortunately, we did capitalize on this opportunity and Joe was sent away and has found work elsewhere. Had we followed the Joe Verba/Eikona plan back in 2005 timeframe, we would have millions in the bank now. Of course, someone else has those millions because we once again chose to live by fear and not by faith.

Maintenance and Improvement of the Cathedral Center

The Cathedral Center is often used as an Eparchial site for ordinations, the great 40th celebration, pre-Cana, St. Nicholas banquets, clergy meetings, etc. Many come there with high expectations of how the building should look at what is provided, both in the building and in the church for services. However, no person, no group other than the St. John's parish (via the Parish Council) help with the upkeep of the facility. Over the years, the upstairs hall was renovated by Msgr Yarnovitz, along with installation of the elevator, the covered entrance, parking lot expansion and associated fencing. The dance floor and upstairs hall lighting improvements, nearby carpeting were all done by Cathedral parishioners. The new boiler installed was done via the St. John's parish council as well as the new sign out by Snow Rd and the partial roof repairs. The Lounge and nearby bathrooms were renovated along with the nearby kitchenette. The two roofs were created over the leaking flat roofed porches off the church and the Fellowship room was improved and a home theater was added. Recently the "bride room" ladies bathroom was renovated and the Snow Road patio fountain was created by a Cathedral parishioner. While the Eparchy essentially owns the bulk of the building, they have done almost nothing when it comes to the maintenance and improvements of it. While everyone in the Eparchy uses and expects the complex to be just so, they are absent when it comes to providing any resources for its upkeep and improvement.

Other Potential Tenants and Revenue

Raising revenue was only part of the drive from the Parish Council. We saw the potential in this building to house a school, get the gym back up and running and let the community know that the church had not closed along with the high school back in 1975. We currently house an English as a Second Language school upstairs as well as Gemini Productions Studio in the old library/museum. We house North Coast Promotions and sponsor the largest Craft Fair in NE Ohio in December. Our two halls and St. Nicholas rooms are used almost every weekend for various rentals, all overseen by Mike Caithaml.

MANY other people have come to our place wanting to have events here or to run part of their business here. Some examples include:

1. The gym restoration project by local CYO (Catholic Youth Organization)
2. City of Parma Tour and Proposal (including buying some of our land)
3. Letter from West Mill Creek on Using Our Gym and paying us for rental and renovation
4. Organizations Like the Cleveland Polka Association Making Us Their New Home
5. Notre Dame College considering us for a West Side Campus
6. Flex City setting up possible daytime classes
7. Cell tower royalty for location at Snow Road side

The full details of these 6 examples can be seen in the following pages. There have been many more – these are just the ones I happened to have saved over the years.

All of them, with their interest in our so called “White Elephant” of a building (all but #5) have been sent away after our not pursuing or simply declining the opportunities.

It is interesting to note, only our own Byzantine Catholics use the term “White Elephant” to describe the Cathedral Center. Outsiders that have vision, that see it’s potential, that realize we have the best located and much acreage in the center of town, that are willing to spend their own money to get a piece of what we have, never use that term.

I come from a long, long line of married clergy and some who suffered at the hands of the atheistic communists for the sake of their faith. I would be happy to simply have a place to worship and serve in our Byzantine Catholic Church. I don’t think the complex has ever been given a fair assessment to its potential of being a vibrant and revenue-generating complex. I also believe that it can eventually generate more revenue that it is worth on paper. Like the old car that gets me to work each day, if I sold the car, I might have a little immediate money, but no way to get to work and make real revenue. It is worth far more to me than what someone might offer me. Glory to Jesus Christ!

Most humbly submitted,

Deacon Gregory Loya
Cathedral of St. John the Baptist

February, 2018

Example 1 - St. John Byzantine Gym Restoration Project (CYO)

Phase or Step 1 - Infrastructure

In reviewing the gym infrastructure at St. John's for possible renovation to accommodate recreational and organized sports play the following was found.

The Gym floor has been maintained extremely well and only requires minimal surface repair that can be performed with little cost. The floor would then need to be cleaned and polished. Lining will need to be reviewed for Basketball and Volley Ball.

The lowered ceiling as well as smoke eaters as well as the octopus duct work associated with the HVAC units need to be removed and or relocated. The kitchen area found in the northeast corner of the gym will need to be removed as well as all piping will need to be capped creating a flat surface. The room dividers as well as divider tracking needs to be removed. The cost of doing this can be offset by having local resources or volunteers aiding the process as well as reselling the aluminum from the lowered ceiling and duct work. In a quick assessment there seems to be at least 600 pounds of scrap that can be converted or resold at approximately 90 cents per pound.

The stage area can and should remain so it can be used as a scorer's area and also serve for future events going forward.

Phase or Step 2 – Equipment for Play

The gym presently has no equipment that can be re-used for play. The following equipment will be required to conduct recreational play for basketball and volleyball.

Basketball Hoops, Backboards, and Support Systems

Ceiling Mounted System with Mechanical Winching (2)	6000.00
Install	1400.00
Freestanding System (2)	10000.00
Install	700.00

Bleachers, Stands, and Benches - Starting day one of playing no bleachers would be required as the existing chairs can provide seating for spectators. At the minimum benches will need to be provided for our players and coaches

21 Foot Players Bench (2 required)	330.00
Tip and Roll Bleachers – 4 row 40 seat capacity	1500.00
Install	200.00

Scoreboard and Controls

6' x 3' Score Board - New	2500.00
10' x 5' Score Board – New	3800.00

8' x 4' Score Board – Used	1200.00
Install	300.00

Volley Ball Equipment

Aluminum Volleyball System Complete with Referee Chair	4300.00
Install	1000.00

Phase or Step 3 – Operations and Return on Investment

After the above requirements are met for either or both sports. CYO will need to be contacted to submit an application to become a host gym site. The process is simple and they are presently in need of these facilities. It is also known that local recreation departments as well as local schools are in need to these facilities. Tournaments as well as nightly rentals can provide a great revenue stream.

With CYO play St. John's will be offered either a day/hourly rental fee and have to forward any and all gate fees to CYO or accept the gate fees as payment for the use of the facility for that day. Presently at St. Mary's we accept that gate fee and are realizing a weekly profit with concessions of approximately 500.00 per day.

Example 2 – City of Parma Tour and Proposals

July 26, 2007

Mr. Michael Caithaml

Building Manager, Byzantine Cathedral

Dear Mr. Caithaml:

Thank you for the tour of the education wing of the Byzantine Cathedral. I was extremely impressed with the facility and I think offers a wealth of opportunity for the Church.

As I indicated, my Department is in constant contact with area schools, Colleges and Universities who are looking to lease, construct or purchase facilities. Your facility, due to its impeccable condition and quality of maintenance, should be highly desirable. This space could also be used for research and development, sales offices or medical offices.

As for the 2nd floor conference area and party room, I can certainly see the Church leasing that space to a company or caterer to manage. Parma has a shortage of facilities like that which can handle large crowds and provide on site meals. I think with the right amount of marketing, your space could be a popular destination for weddings, political fundraisers, etc. Your property is secluded, well maintained and has the parking – on top of being well maintained and attractive.

I'm sure the Church also realizes the potential of the vacant land fronting Snow Road at the corner of Broadview. It appears to be in the 10 acre range, give or take a few. I would have to estimate a value in the neighborhood of \$150,000 to \$200,000 an acre for that site, at a minimum. I would be very interested in assisting the church in making that parcel available for development.

The City is prepared to assist the Byzantine Cathedral in any way to help them fill this vacant space and create a mutually beneficial situation. To start, I would need to get an idea of the total square footage available, total classroom and office square footage, etc. If an original blue print or drawing of the space could be provided, that would help too. We would also need to get an idea of what price per sq. ft. the Church would ask for a lease. The City could even advertise this space free of charge on our website to help attract a business or school use.

I am available at the Church's leisure to sit and discuss further the opportunities on the property. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Erik C. Tollerup

Director, Community Services & Economic Development

City of Parma

(216) 661-7412

Example 3 – Letter from West Mill Creek on Using Our Gym



Dear Father Mike and Bishop John,

My name is Don Sewell. I am a Parma resident, married, and have two sons. My sons (Justin 13) and (Jared 8) attend St. Anthony of Padua School, where my wife and I have been parishioners for the last 13 years. I am writing to you on behalf of West Creek Youth Athletic Org. and its volunteers. Over the last 11 months we have been in the process of starting a youth athletic training and sports group trying to improve athletics and training in the Parma area. We have been fortunate to have volunteers that are passionate about working with and training area children in specific sports, and more importantly developing children to be proud, productive members of the Parma Community.

The sports that we affiliate with and include are: baseball, and softball, expanding into soccer, and hopefully basketball this winter. We are most proud of our summer rec. youth softball league open to all children in the area, which in its first year had over 200 boys and girls participate.. We also work as volunteers with Padua High School softball, preparing the girls with off season training and conditioning for their upcoming seasons, soon we hope to be working with their baseball program as well. We have established a solid relationship with the Parma City Schools and the city of Parma with our recreational and organized sports programs utilizing their outside facilities throughout the summer.

We met with Mike Caithaml and discussed utilizing your gymnasium for our off season athletic training, Mike had mentioned removing the drop ceiling from the gym, and adding lighting, returning the space back to a full gym. Our organization, with Mike's direction, would be willing to remove the existing ceiling, add new lighting and absorb the cost to make these changes. Our Organization and each of our volunteers are insured, and would have waivers signed releasing you of any and all liabilities. We would also keep clean and maintain the interior of the gym for our use and for Wednesday, and Friday Bingo, doing all set up and take down of their equipment.

We would like to use the gym when it is not being used for bingo, from Mid October thru Mid May. At this time we are able to pay \$10,000 for those months. and remove the ceiling and change the lighting, for use of the gymnasium for our winter programs. We are not a make money organization, but rather a break even organization, constantly looking for ways to improve athletics while keeping cost as low as possible for area families.

West Creek Youth Athletic Org. is looking to use your gymnasium, not just to build our NEW athletic programs, but more importantly for a place to be our home. Your consideration of our proposal would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Donald Sewell
West Creek Youth Athletic Org
.440-884-2770
DonSewell@WestCreekYSL.org
www.WestCreekYSL.org
www.ParmaArrows.org

Example 4 – Organizations Like the Cleveland Polka Association Making Us Their New Home

For a couple of years, the Cleveland Polka Association used our hall as their home. Why? Because we have the location, the largest hall, a great dance floor and prices that cannot be beat.



Example 5 - Notre Dame College considering us for a West Side Campus

Notre Dame College of Ohio, South Euclid, had visited us and considered making a west side campus of theirs at the time they were doing large expansion of the school.

Example 6 – Flex City

FlexCity, a body sculpting company, has shown interest in possible daytime classes, which means a steady rental, 15% of what they take in.

Example 7 - Cell tower royalty for location at Snow Road side

Cell towers disguised at trees, flagpoles, etc pay a monthly royalty. The Snow Road woods area would have been a perfect location for such a tower.