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OFFICE *of the* BISHOP

December 16, 2020

Dear Fr. Thakadipuram and Members of Corpus Christi Parish,

As we draw close to the conclusion of Advent and the great feasts that await us, I pray that our common desire for the Messiah unites us ever more in our longing for the peace and grace that we cannot supply by ourselves. Isaiah's prophecy of a time when all species will dwell together in harmony spurs us humans to do all we can to form a community that images God's own unity in all things. In obedience to his Father's saving will, the Word became flesh for us.

You recall that last March, I communicated with you my decision and vision for Corpus Christi Parish regarding the stewardship of the Holy Family Church site. Only two weeks later, the full force of the COVID-19 pandemic hit home. Since then, further progress in clarifying responsibilities and parameters for oversight and support of Holy Family were put on hold. For everyone involved, I would now like to move the process along toward the desired outcome.

Toward that end, I have asked Joe Happe to serve as my delegate to assist Corpus Christi Parish in harmonizing the Holy Family Church Preservation Society (HFCPS) into the parish community.

In many ways, Joe is well-suited to this process. He has been an attorney for 35 years who, after retirement from his firm in 2019, is now working as a professional mediator. As Joe will tell you, he attended a country church in the Sioux City Diocese that is now closed and has been lovingly preserved by a group of parishioners.

Joe Happe was on the original Pastoral Council of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in West Des Moines and has served on the council off and on for a total of 12 years. He tells me he has worked on eight parish and diocesan capital campaign teams. He has also served over 20 years on the Terrace Hill Society Foundation Board of Directors, the organization that purchased and conserved the interior decor of Terrace Hill Mansion. He served nine years on the Board of Trustees of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

Currently Joe is on the Catholic Charities Board of Directors and continues to be very active in his parish. He is a current member of the St. Francis Faith Formation Council and a presenter at the parish's ALPHA program.

Joe is also very familiar with the Council Bluffs community. He attended Creighton and Creighton Law School in Omaha and for time worked in Council Bluffs while in school. Throughout his career as a trial attorney, he handled litigated cases pending in Council Bluffs and now frequently mediates cases in Council Bluffs.

In cementing a close working relationship between Holy Family Church Preservation Society and Corpus Christi parish leaders, my Delegate will discuss issues that have occurred in the past, or that may occur in the future and then, through a process, assist the community to formulate an agreeable plan for the future. He plans to speak with the Corpus Christi Pastor, members of the parish, and the Holy Family Church Preservation Society Board Members to identify both the issues to discuss and a process for reaching a concise plan for the future. If need be, he will conduct a meeting to bring members of the Corpus Christi community into the discussion.

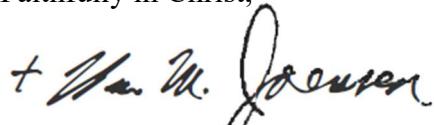
Joe Happe has studied the Corpus Christi Vision 2020 plan and the parameters I have laid out in my letter of March 4, 2020. The procedure is intended to identify potential and current issues and through a process of give-and-take, prepare an agreed Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum will be reviewed annually by the oversight group and the Office of Bishop for the purpose of continuing successful and close relationship between the parish and the preservation society.

This process will further the goal of the spiritual and moral unity of Corpus Christi parish. Indeed, Joe has expressed enthusiasm for the support that Holy Family Church Preservation Society can give to the Catholic faith in the Council Bluffs community and specifically to Corpus Christi parish.

I am very grateful to Joe for accepting the invitation to serve as my delegate, and I trust that he will be received by you as “Joseph, your brother” in faith. I continue to pray for you all in a very intentional way. One particular moment of prayer will be at 2 PM on Sunday, December 27, 2020, when I will celebrate Mass for the Feast of the Holy Family at the Holy Family church site. We know that with social distancing guidelines, not everyone who might want to join us will be able to be physically present, but I invite you all to join us in solidarity of spirit. Please ask our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph intercede for us so that we become ever more united as one body bearing the Son’s name, Corpus Christi Parish.

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

Faithfully in Christ,



Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D.
Bishop of Des Moines