

The Case for Relegation of Saints Cyril and Methodius Church to Profane but not Sordid Use

See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the wilderness I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers. Isaiah 43:19

Parish leadership has determined that due to changing circumstances, including Mass attendance, frequency of Masses, availability of clergy, increased cost of maintenance and repairs, similar capacities and geographic proximity, it is no longer financially responsible and feasible to operate and maintain two churches within one half mile of one another. Therefore, they have recommended Saints Cyril and Methodius Church be relegated to profane but not sordid use. Extensive supporting documentation accompanies this summary. We, therefore, will seek to provide a synopsis of this data for expediency and convenience.

Mass Attendance and Frequency of Masses

At the time of this writing, Holy Spirit Catholic Community celebrates five weekend Masses, three in English and two in Spanish, with all Sunday and weekday Masses celebrated at Our Lady of Sorrows Church. One English language Mass and one Spanish language Mass are celebrated on Saturday at Saints Cyril and Methodius Church. The average attendance from 2022-2024 is 141 people per Mass. Both of the Masses celebrated at Saints Cyril and Methodius Church could be moved to Our Lady of Sorrows Church with no disruption of schedules.

Additionally, locating all Masses at a single church would provide a variety of benefits: reduced confusion to visiting worshipers and clergy, reduced costs for liturgical supplies, simplification of training for ministers, and shared experience of the Mass in the same space as a next step toward the unity of the parish.

Availability of Clergy

Our parish has been asked to consider a future in which the Diocese of Cheyenne is unable to provide us with multiple priests. In this eventuality, it is still impractical to maintain more than one liturgical space, as Masses would not be able to be celebrated concurrently.

Within the last five years, our parish has experienced times in which we had only one priest to meet the needs of the community. The frequency and schedule of the Masses was such that it was necessary for the priest to carefully manage their time to ensure that they could leave one church with enough time to get to the next Mass at another church. These time management issues detract from both the liturgy and the pastor's role as a minister to his community.

Capacity and Proximity

Saints Cyril and Methodius Church and Our Lady of Sorrows Church both seat approximately 275 worshipers and are separated by approximately 0.7 miles (1.1 km). From both a capacity and geographic perspective, these are roughly equivalent spaces.

Maintenance and Repair Costs

Some have voiced concerns about whether this parish has adequately invested in the existing structures, or whether matters of maintenance and repairs have been deferred leading to the current state of Saints Cyril and

Methodius Church. In the past 10 years, we have spent \$78,000 on small maintenance costs and over \$200,000 in capital improvements, while ensuring that parish funds were properly stewarded.

The following chart outlines the cost for insurance and utilities over the past 10 years. The total cost for insurance and utilities in 2024 was \$28,892.27. These necessary expenses are projected to cost \$490,915.00 over the next 10 years.

<i>Expense</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>
Property Insurance	\$3,819	\$3,926	\$3,935	\$3,967	\$4,182	\$4,754	\$5,192	\$5,860	\$6,437	\$8,687	\$9,763
Waste Services	\$1,133	\$1,619	\$1,579	\$1,590	\$1,660	\$1,853	\$1,505	\$1,627	\$1,687	\$1,713	\$1,827
Water/Sewage	\$1,753	\$2,086	\$2,148	\$1,176	\$2,104	\$2,098	\$2,261	\$3,402	\$3,584	\$3,925	\$5,891
Power	\$2,828	\$2,992	\$3,557	\$3,081	\$3,081	\$2,746	\$2,733	\$2,710	\$3,136	\$2,724	\$2,746
Gas	\$6,702	\$7,571	\$4,406	\$8,044	\$8,044	\$4,892	\$5,091	\$4,852	\$6,175	\$8,643	\$8,665

In addition to the operating cost, estimated repairs and improvements of Saints Cyril and Methodius Church are projected at \$2,600,00.00. These costs include the necessary repairs and improvements to the Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish Center. While Saints Cyril and Methodius Church is operating, the City of Rock Springs requires Holy Spirit Catholic Community to maintain adequate parking at the parish center for the use of those attending services at the church, and therefore maintenance costs of the parish center property must be taken into account in the event that Saints Cyril and Methodius Church continues to operate.

Cost Comparison

The costs to keep or to relegate Saints Cyril and Methodius are shown in the below table. If Saints Cyril and Methodius is kept, the accompanying Parish Center must be kept to support parking in the church, therefore the costs for SCM Parish Center are included.

In both cases, it has been identified that both the Saints Cyril and Methodius rectory and Trinity house must be razed. The rectory has overwhelming issues that will cost an estimated \$455,000 to repair and has been described as the most deficient rectory in the Diocese of Cheyenne. We have received a donation of a home valued at approximately \$500,000 where the priests currently reside. It must be sold within a strict timeline in which the funds are to be used to build a new rectory. It is recommended to discontinue the use of Trinity

House because of substantial structural issues. Additional costs from the sale of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Church include the cost of preserving the treasures of the church.

<u>Financial Impact (10 Year)</u>			
<u>Sell Saints Cyril and Methodius Campus</u>		<u>Keep Saints Cyril and Methodius Campus</u>	
Appraisal Value in 2023		SCM Church Repair	
Church	\$307,000	Replace Elevator	-\$850,000
		Rework Front Entryway	-\$110,000
Church Parking Lot	\$72,000	ADA Compliance	-\$250,000
Site Value	\$225,000	Basement Repair	-\$290,000
Parish Center and parking lot	\$1,250,000	Replace knob and tube wiring	-\$100,000
		Parish Center Repair	
Raze Trinity House	-\$65,000	Repair Parish Center Roof	-\$100,000
Raze Old Rectory	-\$60,000	Replace parish center kitchen	-\$200,000
		Repave Parish Center Parking Lot	-\$700,000
Remove, crate, and repair windows	-\$118,000		
Remove Bells	-\$10,222	Raze Trinity House	-\$65,000
Estimated Operating costs while on the market	-\$64,629	Raze Old Rectory	-\$60,000
		Est 10 Years of Operating Expenses	-\$490,915
Profit	\$1,536,149	Loss	-\$3,215,915

Why Saints Cyril & Methodius Church?

Some parishioners have asked why we are seeking relegation of Saints Cyril and Methodius Church and not Our Lady of Sorrows Church, especially in light of the identified similarities in each building's ability to meet the liturgical needs of our community. The answer to that question lies in the associated properties and structures attached to each of these churches.

The Our Lady of Sorrows Church campus houses both the parish offices and the Holy Spirit Catholic School. It would be impractical, if not impossible, to separate the structures from Our Lady of Sorrows Church. Relegation of Our Lady of Sorrows would also create the added difficulty of transporting school students to Saints Cyril and Methodius Church for Mass, and put parish staff, including the clergy further away from the church. Relegation of Saints Cyril and Methodius Church, on the other hand, allows for consolidation of parish resources.

Further, while both churches fail to meet modern standards for accessibility, Our Lady of Sorrows Church remains the better of the two facilities from a safety and accessibility perspective. Extensive details about these issues and the cost for mitigation are provided in supporting documents.

How are we preserving our heritage?

With consideration both for the history and cultural heritage present in the church, as well as a recognition of the sacrifices made by our ancestors to provide this community with a beautiful and inspiring place of worship, the parish Vision Committee was tasked with identifying the treasures of the church. During the listening sessions, those attending were asked what of our beloved treasures should be kept by Holy Spirit Catholic Community. The following items were identified for preservation: bells, stained glass windows, stations of the cross, crucifixes, altar, statues, (including St. Cyril, St. Methodius, and the Holy Family), tabernacle, interior stained glass doors, artwork, the statute in the parking lot, and the mosaic behind the tabernacle. Additionally, vessels, vestments, liturgical supplies and items otherwise not considered fixtures will be removed and preserved.

There are some treasures which cannot be removed either due to their integral nature in the building or due to prohibitive costs. These items include the following: Pipe organ, pews and kneelers, bell tower, and the cross on the steeple.

While preserving the treasures of the church are important, the parish has also sought to document the meaningful ways in which the community has received the Sacraments and celebrated its faith in this space over the past 100 years. The parish has contracted with a videographer, paid for by a restricted parishioner donation, to complete a documentary of Saints Cyril and Methodius Church with contributions from parishioners about their personal experiences and family stories. Additionally, throughout this process, the parish has compiled extensive documents and records on the church, which may be used as the basis for a new written history at a future date.

Why now?

Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin (Our Lady of Sorrows) Parish was established in 1887. In 1912 construction of Saints Cyril and Methodius Church began in order to address the changing demographics and needs of the community. The first attempt to unify this parish came in 1918, with the Bishop's intent that the sole parish church would be Saints Cyril and Methodius Church, however this effort failed. In 1925, official parish boundaries were outlined by the Diocese. Construction of a new Our Lady of Sorrows Church began in 1932. Both parishes operated independently until the schools were unified in 1972. Unification of the two parishes finally came in 1995. In 2014, at the direction of our pastor, a Vision Committee was formed to evaluate opportunities and costs associated with meeting the needs for the future of the parish.

Since 2014, dozens of volunteers, parish leaders and staff have committed thousands of hours of service and prayer to determining a course of action. Extensive investigations of costs and benefits of numerous options have been conducted. After prayerful consideration and review of the evidence, we have determined that we must act for the future of Catholics in Rock Springs. May God continue to abundantly bless Holy Spirit Catholic Community now and in the future.