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Rev. Father Ivan Csete, Pastor

Proverbs 3:5: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

Matthew 17:20: And Jesus saith to him: If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

Dear Fellow Cluster Members, Members of the Advisory Group and Your Eminence:

As is known, the advisory group has made public its recommendations with regard to our parishes several weeks ago. Their document does not pretend to radically affect the parishes outside of Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish, hereafter referred to as STA, and Saint Peter's Parish in Monticello, hereafter referred to as SP. In the case of STA and SP the advisory group recommends a consolidation of said parishes at the site of SP and urges a new name for the ensuing parish with the current site of STA being closed and deconsecrated; basically cease to exist as a separate entity.

Though we appreciate the advisory groups effort and intention, we are convinced they have made grave errors in their study and evaluation that are unacceptable to STA and are only acceptable to SP as a last and final resort. We feel that to proceed with a consolidation of STA and SP resulting in the liquidation of STA would do great harm to both and more importantly to the people each is tasked to shepherd. We feel that the advisory groups' recommendation was worked due to an unfamiliarity of the area, its history, geography, and demographics coupled with a lack of understanding regarding the uniqueness of Sullivan County and issues which one finds here and not in the other counties of this vast archdiocese. Just studying something completely temporal, such as geography, indicates that things are not as they are elsewhere. The territory encompassed by Sullivan County equals roughly 968.13 square miles while the territory encompassed by Manhattan is truly dwarfed at a mere 23.7 square miles. We also very strongly feel that the advisory group did not have enough empirical input from our priest representative, Father Peter Madori, who was ill and unable to attend nor engage most of the groups' important sessions.

Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish humbly presents a counter-proposal. We feel that we are able and willing to form a partnership with the parish of Saint Anthony in Yulan from cluster 75, hereafter referred to as SAY. This would be viable if there will be no other alternatives for St. Anthony's other than closure via consolidation or other venues. Cluster 75 is aware of our offer. As is common knowledge, the Franciscan community is relieving itself of SAY and turning over the shepherding of that flock to the archdiocese.

The Rationale:

1. **For Saint Peter's Parish (Monticello)**, consolidation with STA would be more of a burden than a benefit. SP already has two busy mission churches and a special Hispanic field mission. It is yoked with a serious financial obligation to the tune of \$400,000 debt due to construction. STA also has a similar though smaller financial burden and we do not feel that SP would appreciate the added debt. SP has a large enough flock to shepherd taking into account the ever-growing Hispanic population.
2. **Saint Thomas Aquinas** is a parish with a notable history that survived the ravages of said history when the Dominican Sisters closed the vast Catholic refuge known as Saint Joseph's in Forestburgh in 1981. The church interior was beautifully restored in 2004-2005 at great expense and through the craftsmanship, artistry, muscle and sweat of our own parishioners, all to give to our God a fitting house and to our people a dignified space to worship God. Our population may be small when compared to our urban neighbors because we are situated in the woodlands, but we have a proportionately large number of baptisms, confirmations and weddings; a fine and thriving religious education program which focuses on authentic Catholicism, and very importantly, we have a number of promising possible vocations. We have attached a **Sacramental & Vocations Activity** graphic to this letter for your perusal. STA is not currently availing itself nor has ever made use of the I.P.F. (Inter Parish Finance program), and has consistently reached and gone over its assigned goal in the annual Cardinal's Appeal. STA is extremely rural in nature as opposed to SP, which is very much urbanized due to its location in Monticello. STA is much more akin to SAY and a collaboration between STA and SAY would present with a much more natural state of affairs.
3. **Saint Anthony's Parish (Yulan)**, which has been vacated by the Franciscan community and whose flock is now the archdiocese's to shepherd is a small rural parish very similar in character and population to STA positing itself naturally for a partnership with STA, if necessary and if it is in fact the Will of our Father. The pastor of STA, Father Ivan Csete is more than willing to take on this partnership under his own direction.
4. **The Current Priest Shortage** factors gravely in any serious consideration of the solution proposed by STA. By fusing the two parishes so that they share resources and a priest, other potentially affected priests would be free to serve other parishes, which may need them. Father Csete is currently 77 years old and in remarkably excellent health, both physically and mentally as well as spiritually and emotionally. Due to his age it is highly unlikely that he might be sent off to another parish to begin a new term as pastor and in the case of his pastoral retirement some years from now another priest could easily take his place.
5. **New 2000 acre gated community has been approved for Forestburgh** and construction has started. This occurred after the advisory group met and they had no knowledge of it. Developers expect the first homes to be occupied by 2015 and they are predicting more than 1000 homeowners. How many will be Catholic? St. Thomas is just down the road. See attached article from Time Warner Cable News.*

NOTE: The Hungarian Factor: STA is the only parish in the whole of the archdiocese where there is a Hungarian Mass on a monthly basis, with accompanying baptisms, weddings, and other sacraments made available to the people, excepting Saint Stephen of Hungary in Manhattan which has also been vacated by the Franciscan community. Father Csete happens to be the sole priest in the archdiocese who speaks Hungarian and is able to effectively shepherd this particular demographic. Parishioners of Hungarian blood travel to STA at least once a month from the farthest corners of the archdiocese, and even from outside the archdiocese as far as 100 miles away for some, for a little Hungarian Catholic

Tradition, Atmosphere and Fellowship. They come to the, "kis templom az erdőben," "little church in the forest." Shameful would it be for this to disappear with the mere stroke of a pen.

There it is. We truly hope and pray that our proposal and attending rationale will find a willing and amenable reception by our Cluster, the Advisory Group and most importantly by our Shepherd.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Father Ivan L. Csete, Pastor

Core Group Member Signatures

Don Elliott – President

Gabriel Espinosa – Secretary

Eda LaPolt

Hilda Lehr

Bernie Lehr

* Developers move forward with Lost Lake Resort
in sleepy Sullivan County town

By: Eva McKend - TWCNEWS

A major change for the people in the sleepy Town of Forestburgh, as developers move forward with their plans to construct a luxury development in the community. Eva McKend has more on how it will impact people who live there.

FORESTBURGH, N.Y. -- When a large developer first came marching into Forestburgh, a town of a little more than 800, with plans to build a sprawling resort community, it didn't go un-noticed.

"By taking a project of this magnitude and placing it in this little quiet town, it changes the demographics forever," said Town of Forestburgh Supervisor Bill Sipos.

Now, more than five years later, the people of Forestburgh are welcoming construction at Lost Lake Resort, a Double Diamond Companies gated golf community, as well as the possibility the large scale development brings.

"When you stand back, it's still going to look the same. We've got strict restrictions. We don't allow people to remove trees that aren't necessary and we feel as though the beauty is going to remain," said Randy Gracy, SVP of Construction at Double Diamond Companies.

At the ribbon cutting, elected officials continually praised the developer for not asking or taking any tax breaks for this project.

"For the tax base, right now in Forestburgh, we have very few home owners and still we have bills that we have to pay," said Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther.

The upscale property will attract more than a thousand people. The developer says its amenities will be accessible to those who already live in the area. Once it's fully built, it could mean millions of dollars in revenue for the county.

"Forestburgh is basically a diamond in the rough and it has always been kept this little sleepy town and the residents like it this way," said Sipos.

Double Diamond Companies has already sold twenty lots and expects to welcome people to the property in 2015.

- See more at: <http://hudsonvalley.twcnews.com/content/news/741436/developers-move-forward-with-lost-lake-resort-in-sleepy-sullivan-county-town/>

Sacramental & Vocations Activity

Year	Baptisms	Confirmations	Weddings	Altar Boys	Vocations
2010-11	3	0	1	3	0
2011-12	18	1	7	2	0
2012-13	14	7	4	4	0
2013-14	16	12	4	4	2

Thru March

4 Official, 2 Training, 2 Aspiring

