

1 June 2010

Dearest Parishioners and the Rowan community,

Peace in the Lord. Enclosed is a letter from Bishop Galante that I wish to send to you personally. Please read it carefully. It is wonderful news for our parish, for the Rowan University community as well as for our diocese! The letter explains the scope of our mission as a parish and includes a very significant desire by the diocese to reach out more fervently to our college communities – students, faculty, and staff.

On the bishop's letter, you will see a list of people who formed the Task Force studying the "university parish" concept and St. Bridget Parish. I suggest that when you have an opportunity, thank them personally for their unselfish giving.

Above all I want you to approach the bishop's decision not so much as "saving our parish," but as a sacred mandate given to our parish as we reach out to the Rowan University community. We have a great and long history to build upon, but we also have an exciting future to embark upon!

You might have many questions; however, following are a few things that I wish to emphasize now:

1. St. Bridget remains a "**territorial parish**" – as it has for almost 125 years. We have a rich history that has evolved over the years and continues to evolve.
2. St. Bridget will continue with **the Hispanic ministry** focusing on central Gloucester County. This ministry has enriched our parish in many ways. The Hispanic ministry is an integral part of our parish and, notwithstanding a linguistic gap, we form one ecclesial family as brothers and sisters in the faith.
3. In regards to **the Rowan University community**, we will be a "personal parish." This is a technical term in church law that means that a parish is assigned to serve a particular population – in this case, a university community.
 - a. This means that the parish is charged in serving the Catholic population of Rowan – **students, faculty, and staff**. The parish is not affiliated with Rowan in any legal or administrative way – there is still "the separation between Church and state." This separation needs to be upheld; nonetheless, the parish is at the service of the Rowan community in any way that could benefit it.
 - b. As a "**personal parish**," St. Bridget will be able to administer to the Rowan community all that sacraments associated with any parish – Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Matrimony, Reconciliation, Anointing of the sick in addition to being a parish serving its territorial parishioners and Hispanic parishioners.
 - c. **The Newman Center**, which is on the edge of the Rowan campus on Redmond Avenue, will continue to operate as it has been doing. It is a very warm place to receive Rowan students, faculty, and staff. For Rowan University the Newman Center is considered a chartered student club, i.e., "The Catholic Campus Ministry." For us, more so, the Newman Center will play a key role: it is the "hinge" between the parish campus and the university campus. Furthermore, it is at a key location where the new development is taking place. I hope, in time, the Newman Center will become an more familiar place to all of you.

The Gospel points out: "to those who have been given much, much will be required." We have been entrusted with a great ministry which bodes well for our future. Yet, much needs to be done. With the power of the Holy Spirit and in sharing our collective gifts in a spirit of stewardship, we will carry out with great fruit our ministry. Let us pray, too, for the assistance of our patron, St. Bridget. She lived the Gospel message with great vision, courage, and charity.

Sincerely yours,

Fr. Matthew Weber
Pastor
Church of St. Bridget