



*St. John the Evangelist Church
55 Martha Street
Spencerport, New York 14459
585-352-5481*

January 29, 2017

Dear parishioners and friends,

I write to you today in order to inform you about significant matters concerning the St. John's Religious Shoppe. I wanted to alert you that following its closure in January for inventory and reorganization, the Shoppe will not be reopening for normal business on February 1st. I deeply regret this event, and want you to understand how this came about.

St. John's Religious Shoppe is a unique entity within the Diocese of Rochester. It is a parish-owned, all volunteer, self-funded ministry that accomplishes its mission of evangelization primarily through the sale of discounted Catholic materials, as well as the personal interactions of Shoppe volunteers with customers at its retail shop located in our former school building. The Diocese has continued to focus on minimizing parish activities that create risks for potential financial theft and loss, and any subsequent scandal. I appreciate this concern to protect our parishes and to assist the pastors in exercising vigilance in financial matters. The Shoppe's successful growth over the last 27 years, along with its unique characteristics of an all-volunteer staff, large inventory and use of cashiers, raised significant concerns during periodic reviews of its operations by independent auditors. For the last several years, the Shoppe has attempted to develop additional internal controls and proposals that would enable it to effectively manage these risks. However, after careful consideration and based on the unanimous recommendation of the Diocesan Audit Committee and the independent auditors, on May 18, 2016, Bishop Matano conveyed the decision that the Shoppe form a separate legal entity to be owned and operated independently of St. John the Evangelist Church and its affiliated organizations, as well as other diocesan, parish and their affiliated organizations.

Over the last eight months the Shoppe Manager, Tom DiVincenzo, has attempted to recruit several existing non-profit organizations to take over ownership of the Shoppe, as a separate legal entity but with the same mission and practices, and operating as a rent-paying tenant of the parish at its current location. In addition, he extensively evaluated setting-up a new 501(c)3 Non-Profit corporation for this same purpose. These efforts were done quietly, with the hope that we could satisfy the Diocese's directive without causing undue concern among parishioners and the Shoppe's customers that the Shoppe might be closing. For a variety of reasons, these efforts unfortunately have been unsuccessful.

The last step we need to take to avoid the permanent closure and liquidation of the Shoppe is a request to you, our parishioners and other Religious Shoppe supporters, for any reasonable proposals to acquire and operate the Shoppe. To handle this phase as expeditiously as possible, I will accept formal written declarations of interest along with preliminary plans from serious parties until February 19, 2017. These and any other inquiries can be directed to my email: floncle@dor.org. Please no phone calls. Subsequently, we will meet with those who have expressed an interest, laying out parameters and answering questions to assist with the formulation of formal proposals for the acquisition of the Shoppe that will be accepted until March 26, 2017. The proposals essentially have to be a convincing narrative of how the interested party would go about acquiring the Shoppe, what legal form it would take, and how it would run in a sustainable manner. With the assistance of knowledgeable parties, I will take these proposals under consideration to determine their viability and any further course of action.

Regardless of the outcome of this last step, I want to reiterate that Bishop Matano and others in the Diocese, along with myself, and those familiar with its ministry regard the Shoppe as a vital contribution to the evangelization and stewardship of our faith. It has provided a wealth of inspiration and knowledge about our Catholic faith to the people of the entire region for many years. The DiVincenzo family has been invaluable in the creation and management of this ministry, and the numerous volunteers cannot be thanked enough for all their work and dedication in their devotion to the Shoppe and its customers.

I am sure that this news will be as distressing for many of you as it is for me. I stand ready to offer my support and prayers as we all come to terms with these developments. I would ask that you consider channeling any strong emotions into constructive action and prayer that helps you and others process those emotions without seeking to find fault, hurl blame or make accusations. Satan is the great accuser; the Devil is the great divider. As Christians, we counter those with mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation. And as Christians, we know that through loss, new ways are found, through death, new life arises. I hope that you will join me and other supporters of the Shoppe in praying for a resolution of this matter that will not detract from, but encourage greater efforts of evangelization and stewardship that lead to the greater glory of God and growth of the Church as it strives to do the will and mission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. John F. Loncle