

CLOSING OF ST. JOHN BOSCO MISSION IN SARDIS

Over the past few years the number of people coming to the Mission of St. John Bosco in Sardis has steadily declined. On most Sundays there are only ten people at mass. I have wondering whether or not the Mission is still viable and over the past year I have come to the conclusion that the Mission has served its purpose and should now be closed.

One of the reasons I have come to this conclusion has to do with the few active priests now working in the Diocese of Steubenville. We only have 35 priests serving in active ministry in the entire Dioceses. Several years ago before Bishop Montforton the Diocese conducted sessions to plan for our future and one of the conclusions that was reached in that pastoral planning time was that non priest should offer three masses on Sundays in three different locations. That part of the plan was never carried out in Monroe County.

However, given the fact that there are so few people now attending the Mission and that there is a Catholic parish four miles away in New Martinsville I have concluded that the Mission should now be closed. I realize that for those who are attending the Mission presently this is not a decision that will be welcomed, although I suspect that for sometime the question has been on everyone's mind.

I presented my thoughts to the Bishop and he in turn talked with his Presbyteral Council and it was unanimously agreed upon that the Mission should now be closed. The Bishop will publish his Decree in the Steubenville Register this coming Friday and he will offer the last Mass at the Mission on November 7th .

I will announce this to the community in Sardis this Sunday. I have been going to Sardis for over two years and have grown quite fond of those attending. I will invite those who would like to do so to come to St. Sylvester or St. John the Baptist if they so desire. I would love it if they did. However, it might pose quite a drive for those who live in Newport or New Matamoras. The drive from the Mission across the Ohio River to New Martinsville is a short ten minute drive and on snowy days would be a lot easier than trying to drive to Woodsfield.

This is the first time in my priesthood that I have ever had to do something like this and it is not something that is easy to do. May the Good Lord help us all to preserve in our holy faith until the end and may we stay always alert to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.