

ST. ROSE OF LIMA PARISH, SOOKE
AND ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF VICTORIA

Vision and Principles Guiding
Planning and Construction of New Parish Facilities

(NOTE: this statement has the agreement of the Townsend Road Committee. We are open to your comments and reflections to shape it into a consensus statement of St. Rose of Lima Parish)

“As the Father sent me, so I am sending you” (John 20:21). The Risen Christ passed on to his disciples the identical mission that he had been given by the Father. And he had articulated that mission in the words: “I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10). Our mission as his disciples, then, is that all may have life and have it more abundantly.

We achieve this mission to the extent that we plant and nurture the Good News in the world of our daily lives. And the Good News is essentially the vision Christ shared of right relationships: with God, with one another, and with all creation of which we are a part. These are not three different visions; rather, they are intertwined forming an integral whole.

The development of the Townsend Road site (including building and terrain), should reflect and express these right relationships in both the process and the product. It should be noted that there is no assumption here that we—as Christ’s disciples—either have been or ever will be perfect. While we acknowledge both the call and the commitment to strive to “be perfect as the Heavenly Father is perfect”, we know that shortcomings, even failure, are part of the experience of human

life, and so we embrace repentance, forgiveness, starting over – in both ourselves and in others.

Right relationship with God involves engagement with God as both transcendent and immanent (as “out there” and “right here”). God loves us just the way we are, and he loves us too much to leave us just the way we are. When he took on our human nature as Jesus of Nazareth God affirmed the sacredness of all of creation. It is at once a sacred place and a sacred process, an evolving reality in which our actions play a role. We are to some extent “co-creators” with God. Our development on Townsend Road should reflect these realities.

Right relationship with our fellow human beings flows out of appreciation of the individual dignity of every person, a dignity based on God’s unlimited love for that person. A commitment to justice and fairness inevitably comes up against the fact that in the workings of every society, some people are pushed to the margins. Christ made a point of identifying particularly with the marginalized: “As often as you did it to the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” And so to bring justice and balance into society, we are called to make a preferential option for the poor. We are to form cooperative relationships with others in working “that all may have life and have it more abundantly.” Our facility on Townsend Road should be open and welcoming, a place to celebrate the goodness of life, and to heal its wounds. Elderly, middle-aged, young adult, and children should each and all feel at home on the property and in the building, and able to contribute to activities and programs offered there.

How we envision the right relationship with all of creation is undergoing a transformation right now. The industrial revolution and technical advances of the last two

centuries, crowned with the technological acceleration of the last fifty years have vastly increased the breadth of our reach and the scale of our projects in reshaping our physical world. And now we are discovering the negative side-effects of much of what we considered progress a few short years ago. A mind-set that gives priority to ownership boundaries, that focuses on “my lot” and what I can do with it, largely ignores the fact that lot lines are artificial to nature. And so little or no consideration is given to the lot as part of an ecosystem, as providing ecological services both within the lot and as part of a wider bioregion. The result has been diminution and destruction of significant parts of what sustains life and growth in creation. The Canadian Catholic Bishops (2003 *Pastoral Letter on the Christian Ecological Imperative*) and Pope Benedict XVI (2009 Encyclical *Charity in Truth*) have both labeled this approach as a sinful disrespect for the inner workings of God’s creation, and have urged us to read the Genesis creation story as a call to exercise stewardship, not dominion, over the earth.

The growing realization of the importance of ecosystem integrity is transforming our approach to development. We are learning to mimic nature when we design new developments. When we view cities as sustainable ecosystems we look at the long term functioning of the development on “my lot” as part of the larger environmental, social, and economic functioning of the city and of the region. We are then exercising stewardship and developing in a sustainable way.

On the Townsend Road property when we combined the removal of danger trees with the initial clearing for building, we acted on priorities of the typical 20th century mind-set. We have put in place mitigation measures, and are monitoring to ensure no resulting damage to the water system which becomes

Nott Brook. We are resolved to continue with the development using a consciously sustainable ecosystem approach. This project should be a model for ecologically sensitive building of a church facility on a small budget.

Part of our long-term considerations for the property is the future use of the property for an income-producing development which also provides a service to the community, for example senior housing, medical services, social services. Accordingly, we would like the parish facilities to make use of the slope on the property to provide ground floor access to each of two stories, thus reducing the footprint of the building. The parts of the lot not used for the building, access, and parking should be designed to enhance the functions of the parish facility and its integration into the neighborhood.

The funding for this project is coming from a generous long-term, no-payment-due for 20 years, one million dollar loan from the Catholic Diocese of Victoria, plus the current building fund from the parish, plus future donations to that building fund. These funds currently total about \$1, 305,000. Setting aside 10 % of that amount for contingency, the project budget should be stated as \$1,175,000. Feasibility within that budget must be established before any designs are finalized.

(Comments may be made to Townsend Road Committee members including Fr. Mike. Comments may be emailed to strose@shawbiz.ca. Committee list is on the website www.strose.shawbiz.ca)