



Article - Vision Statement #1:

"We will put the Gospel and teachings of the Catholic Church into action, welcoming and including all people."

Guest writer is Andy Killiany, chair of the Worship Committee

The first vision statement addresses the need for parishioners to feel welcome in coming to worship at the National Shrine of the Little Flower. That vision statement: "We will put the Gospel and teachings of the Catholic Church into action, welcoming and including all people" speaks to each of us. By identifying with this statement, one of the first items we encounter is the difficulty any disabled person has in gaining access to some areas of our church. This not only applies to those people who rely on some type of assisted device, but also includes the elderly and physically challenged, who have trouble climbing steps.

As the Master Plan Committee conducted its research, we discovered a significant percentage of the parishioners are, through age and handicaps, experiencing challenges, which will require easier access to worship comfortably. Our preliminary plan addresses this need by relocating some of the pews to gain more space for wheelchairs and crutches, installing a raised level floor and ramp to provide access to the altar rail level, and an additional ramp to allow access to the confessionals. When designed correctly, the above-mentioned items will not create any major visual changes to the architectural beauty of the church.

The outside parking area improvement plan calls for a drop-off and pick-up area for anyone having difficulty walking or gaining access to the church. Additionally, there will be no streets to cross while going to and from parked cars. One key asset of the preliminary plan is to provide parking for more vehicles and eliminate the problem of being "locked or pinned in the parking lot" which so many of us have experienced during some of the Masses. The proposed Twelve Mile Road entrance would provide easier access for all and includes the installation of rest rooms at this location. Many have expressed a need for restrooms at this entrance.

The Vicariate has identified the need to develop a program to include people with disabilities into parish worship and activities. The need can be satisfied by the creation of a ministry to work with the disabled, drawing them into our fold and making them feel welcome and needed as part of our various activities and ministries. Easier access to the church and within the church can make this possible.