

June 26, 1965

Most Reverend Alexander Zaleski
Co-Adjutor Bishop of Lansing
215 Seymour Avenue
Lansing, Michigan

Dear Bishop Zaleski:

The summer mission chapel, St. Rita, at Clark Lake which is attached to this parish is a frame building fifty years old or more as far as I can determine. It is in very bad shape and beyond further hope of repair; efforts have been made in recent years to make it safe and usable but it has reached the point of being a positive danger when crowded. The building is rotting and has a decided leaning which iron rods no longer seem able to control. I am sure that if public officials were to visit the Chapel they would close it down immediately as being a fire and collapse danger.

At the present site of St. Rita Chapel, the property lines run about four or five feet away from the actual tiny building on all sides. There is no future in this site as I see it and there is no suitable or reasonably priced adjacent property available. We have a monumental traffic problem every Sunday during the chapel season since most of the parking must be on narrow lanes and roads leading to the chapel. I should point out here that preliminary study of the present property deed indicates that if the present tiny site is abandoned for chapel use it will revert to the estate of the original donor.

The chapel seats about two hundred persons and even though we try to have two Masses during the summer season it is hopelessly crowded. Depending on the week-end weather, a total of four hundred to seven hundred attend Mass in varying degrees of moral oneness with those inside the building. About one-half of the people who attend are from the Jackson area (most of them from Queen's parish) and the remainder are from the Detroit area and from Ohio, particularly from Toledo. A good number of those attending Mass at St. Rita Chapel are of above-average income and have nice cottages at the Lake. At the present time about twenty-five families who attend Our Lady of Fatima during the off-season live permanently in the Clark Lake area.

There is \$11,400.00 in the savings account of St. Rita Chapel; in addition, the bank account carries a balance of \$278.33 at present. The net income, for various reasons, is small. In 1963 it was \$1695.75 and in 1964 it was \$1889.00.

May I suggest, for your consideration, that we purchase a new site of at least ten acres and erect a building suitable to the existing needs and with future needs in view. To inaugurate such a program, I would like to form committees on site, finance etc. from among the men who attend the Chapel.

A big point, in my judgment, in present considerations would be the development of the artificial Lake Columbia which is located just south and slightly to the east of Clark Lake. This artificial lake is already in existence and although the building development is slow at the present time, with some forty to fifty lake-front homes now up, it is anticipated that the 1200 lots will be bought and built on within ten to twenty years. The Lake Columbia area is very attractive and is convenient to Jackson, perhaps a twenty-five minute drive on Highway 127 which is easily accessible within two miles. Lake Columbia is situated almost as a continuation of Clark Lake. It is two miles from Brooklyn, nine miles from the church at Irish Hills, fourteen miles from Michigan Center, nine miles from the property now owned by the Diocese at South Jackson and Kimmel Roads, and seven miles from the artificial Lake LeAnn which is near Somerset Center in Hillsdale County. Lake LeAnn has about the same future as Lake Columbia according to all those with whom I have spoken.

Without any obligation being incurred, Mr. Gerald J. McDevitt has gone over the area around Clark Lake with me as did Father Oser and it is our recommendation that we purchase property on Jefferson Road (bordering Clark Lake on the south) which would also be very near Lake Columbia. Before any final decision on site, I would want to discuss the matter at length with other knowledgeable laymen in the area who attend the summer mission. The thought we have in mind is to purchase enough property now so that in the future, as the area and need developed, it could well be the site of a permanent parish. If we were to purchase property now with a view to a parish development in the distant future, it would be my hope that a building be erected at the present time to care for summer mission needs in such a way that the building could later be used for the possible future parish needs.

If it would be possible for the Diocese to purchase the property for future parish development, I feel that the summer people could be approached and would be generous enough to make it possible to go ahead with a building adequate to care for present needs. The summer people have many times expressed hope that we may be able to build and I feel quite confident that we should be able to raise a minimum of \$10,000.00 from them. That amount, in addition to the \$11,400.00 now on hand should enable us to proceed safely to something in the range of \$30,000.00 plus.

I have tried to present the picture at Clark Lake as I see it and the suggestions and possible approaches are mentioned, of course, only for your consideration. Your judgment in the matter will be appreciated and I will be happy to discuss our problems at Clark Lake with you at further length if you so desire. I enclose herewith a yellow sheet showing the area. If you think our planning has merit, I would like to start immediately to work with the men and present final site and finance recommendations to you.

Thanking you for your kind consideration of this matter, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Reverend Paul V. Donovan