



ARCHDIOCESE OF SANTA FE
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
4000 Saint Joseph Place NW
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STATEMENT

The Future of St. Anthony Church, Questa, NM

The concerns for the future of St. Anthony located in Questa, NM have recently been reported by secular media. We wish to clarify the process and the reasoning behind the decision made to dismantle the church building in order to assure the safety of St. Anthony's parishioners.

Albuquerque, NM—Wednesday, July 29, 2009-- Immediate Release – *Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan is deeply concerned for the safety and spiritual needs of all the people of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. He understands the deep reverence the community of Questa has for St. Anthony and is praying for the people of Questa. He greatly desires that the church be rebuilt in Questa. He is our spiritual father and leader, and has the responsibility to take care of all the churches and buildings of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.*

Here in the Archdiocese, we are all saddened at the loss of the St. Anthony church building. It is unfortunate that the secular media did not report the numerous facts upon which the decision was made to remove the existing structure. As Chancellor for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, I have assisted the St. Anthony parish community to have input into the decision regarding the future of their church building. It has been my joy to work with all those dedicated parishioners.

Archbishop Sheehan and his College of Consultors (a group of senior pastors - some of who have served as pastor of St. Anthony) and his staff have regularly received status reports for almost a year. These professionals:

- *reviewed the architects' and engineers' findings;*
- *considered the instability and safety of the current structure;*
- *assessed the historical importance of the building;*
- *reviewed the financial history of the parish;*
- *analyzed parish survey results;*
- *listened to the needs voiced by the community through its parish and finance councils, a public meeting; and,*
- *most importantly, focused on the spiritual needs of the parish.*

*Unfortunately, the 170-year old walls of the St. Anthony church building are no longer viable. One wall has collapsed, and the others have not had any structural integrity for years. **Ground penetrating radar imaging over twelve feet below the church structure discovered no foundation.***

The church can be rebuilt and restored once:

- *all historical items are removed and placed in safe storage;*
- *the church walls are brought down;*
- *debris is removed;*
- *area drainage problems addressed; and,*
- *a proper foundation laid.*

The need to protect the safety of the community became apparent when it was discovered that people had been climbing the fence constructed around the church and were entering the building without safety gear and without permission. These people put their lives at risk because it is documented that the remaining walls in the church building are at high risk of collapse as well.

I am ready to a help in any way I can as well and will continue to make available the resources of my office to assist Fr. Dino Candelaria and the parish community. All of you are in my prayers.

– Very Rev. Timothy Martinez, Chancellor