



November 23, 2008

Fellow Parishioners,

Parish Council

James E. Taylor
Dr. Paul Camarata
Barb Gangel
Bob Gillis
Michael Hagen
Dan Heiman
Randy Huber
Eileen Iammartino
Ann Kranz
Jerry Raggett
Chuck Sipple
Mary Thompson

During our October meeting, your Parish Council tackled many subjects and has deliberated on several matters that are of extreme importance to you these next few months. We discussed matters regarding the intended use of the St. Joseph's Room and specifically the service of food for breakfast, luncheons and other special events. It was confirmed that this room, which is located adjacent to the church's entrance foyer and nave, was intended as a meeting room and not for food service. In the future, all such events will be held in the Parish Hall, which in the near future will have at its disposal, a movable partitioned area to segment smaller spaces for food service uses.

Discussion was also held with a great deal of concern and apprehension not to schedule a 4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass. The simple reason for eliminating this service is safety. This Mass has been attended by as many as 1,800 plus people seated in the main Church's Nave, Chapel, St. Joseph's Room and Parish Hall. Our church facility was not designed nor approved by the City of Leawood, Kansas ordinances to permit these numbers of people at a public assembly. Not only does this assembly violate health & safety codes and our parish liability insurance, but also the off street parking requirements and traffic controls that are not in place. In the past, the city has not enforced these violations but it was the consensus of the Parish Council that the Parish abide by these health & safety ordinances, especially in light that the sitting Mayor and two Council Members are parishioners.

The second Mass issue was the elimination of the 12:00 p.m. (noon) Sunday Mass. Again, a lively discussion was held and the conclusion reached by the council was to eliminate this Mass. The primary reasons are; that we do not have a permanent Associate Priest and that scheduling of Altar Servers, Ushers, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion and music ministries is difficult to achieve and becomes even more difficult during the summer months. The Council will reconsider this matter at a time when a permanent Associate Priest is assigned to our parish, which could be June, 2009.

Many of you are wondering, "What is happening regarding the Parish Building Renovation Program and School Expansion?" Presently, an ad hoc committee has been formed to evaluate the expansion program specifically aimed at the relocation of the 7th & 8th grade classrooms. Data obtained from neighboring private and public schools indicates declining enrollment north of 135th Street. And just this past year, enrollment in our Kindergarten dropped from 51 students last year to 33 this year. Further study indicates the drop in enrollment is not due to fewer households electing to send their children to Catholic schools, but rather changing demographics and fewer parish households with children of grade school age. Our forecast indicates this enrollment trend will continue through our parish school for several years to come or until housing turns over and new families with younger children re-populate the area.

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Based on this year's enrollment, the parish was justified in consolidating three kindergarten classrooms into two. The challenge now before the ad hoc committee and the Parish and Finance Council, is to establish classroom enrollment capacity and determine the appropriate funding models and formulas. Converting from tithing to tuition has been discussed but is not the preferred funding method since tuition is not tax deductible.

Adding to this dilemma is the cost to construct a school addition which would require the Parish to undertake a capital campaign. Presently, the Parish reserves are sufficient to provide funding for the anticipated Church and School improvements, repairs and maintenance of these buildings & grounds, but not a building addition to the school facility. A future "Town Hall" meeting will be scheduled after the first of the year to present recommendations and receive input from you, the parishioners.

Other agenda items included Mr. Chuck Sipple presenting his review and recommendations for the Parish Goals and Objectives, Ministries, and outreach programs. One that has immediately caught the attention of our Council is an "outreach invitation" to those Catholic's who are disenfranchised from the Catholic Church, i.e. attendance at Sunday Mass, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, etc. It would be our goal through you, as neighbors to these Catholics, to evangelize and encourage them to reunite with the Catholic Church. A parish ministry will be formed to assist you in your efforts to reunite these individuals or families to the Church. Future communiqués will be published to direct you to that ministry and those individuals providing assistance.

Well, what did you think about Archbishop Joseph Naumann's visit to our Parish the weekend of October 25th and October 26th, 2008? You may not have been aware that he either celebrated or concelebrated the Mass and preached at each of the scheduled Saturday and Sunday Masses. He also met with the parish leadership for over three (3) hours receiving their reports on the status of the Parish finances, outreach programs, future expansion plans, Catholic School, Religious Education, R.C.I.A. and other community programs that as a Parish we provide, i.e. food & clothing drive, St. Mary's Food Kitchen, Christmas in October, Knights of Columbus, "Call to Share", Time & Talents, to name a few.

In closing, we will report further on the School Expansion, Capital Campaign, Repairs and Renovation activities in future communications. May this letter find you and your family in good health and spiritually alive.

Parish Council Member,



James E. Taylor, Sr.

PS: In the next week or so, the Parish Finance Council will be presenting an income and expense report and other information concerning our parish finances.