

**ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, February 20, 2006**

Council Members in Attendance: Fr. Bill Wagner, Vic Ivers, Michelle Stultz, Jim Conrady, Duane Bradley, and Kathy Hornschemeier.

Council Members Absent: Ralph Bedel, Doug Young, John Duncan, and Janet Tate.

Others in Attendance: Mike Gennett.

The St. Thomas More Parish Council meeting was called to order by Vic Ivers at 7:10 PM EST. Fr. Bill Wagner opened the meeting with a prayer.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting: The last council meeting was held on Monday, January 16th. Vic asked if there were any questions regarding the minutes. Mike Gennett stated there had been no feedback.

Duane Bradley made a motion that the minutes be accepted as written. Jim Conrady seconded the motion. Council voted 6 to 0 to accept the minutes.

Vic Ivers wanted to pass on some concerns he had received about what PSR families were receiving in exchange for their PSR registration fee. Just getting a religious education text book was deemed as insufficient for the money being spent. Fr. Bill and a number of council members felt some people just "do not get it." Mike Gennett stated our fees are comparable to neighboring parishes. The fees are not going up next year.

Business Manager Report: Mike Gennett gave the report.

2006-7 Budget & School Registration - The Finance Committee met on January 26th to discuss the 2006-7 budget and other topics. The budget currently has a deficit of \$68,680.51 and it was not approved. Finance

agreed to wait until school registrations were complete in order to plan the school structure for next year. Finance plans to meet again in early April. They wish to see a balanced budget for next year that includes all our expenses including paying the Archdiocese on our loan as agreed.

Both Michelle Stultz and Duane Bradley voiced concern about the inadequate communication regarding the school registration process for 2006-7. The concerns included not sending any information regarding the tuition fees in next year's registration packet. Plus, the issue regarding the large sixth grade class has not been addressed. They both felt that the registration process will be hindered by this lack of communication. Mike stated the school informed him on Friday 199 kids have registered. Some concern was expressed this might be low, but both Fr. Bill and Mike stated we are way ahead of where we were at this point in the past. Neither were concerned. Mike stated the number of registrations coming in each day was high and he was behind in processing the financial piece because of the usually high daily return rate. Michelle Stultz wanted to know how many students were new. Mike said he did not know for certain but he had processed about 120 registrations and he thought out of that group it was around six children.

Mike Gennett responded that the finance committee did not meet until January 26th to approve the tuition fees. This date had been known and communicated for some time. The tuition fees were passed on to the school and posted on our parish web site the day it was approved. Mike also stated that the school wanted to communicate a specific structure for 2006-7. Finance did not agree with this request. The problem with promising a specific staff level prior to registrations being accepted was if we did not meet our registration numbers we could be obligated to structure the school as communicated. Where would this additional money come from? Fr. Bill stated this could be well over \$30,000 per employee. Not everyone seems to understand the financial pressures everyone is facing in the Archdiocese these days. If we make a large mistake and can't pay our obligations, the diocese has promised they will take over those types of parish budgets. Finance decided we need to commit to only what we can pay for. They want the 2006-7 budget balanced. Mike said he had suggested to the school they communicate a structure will be put into place that will fairly support our actual registration numbers that we can afford.

Michelle Stultz stated she understood this, but something should have still been better communicated. She also pointed out that she did not know about the High School Equalization process until Mike Gennett had told her about it the other day. The communication on this program is also very poor. She had no idea that the parish contributes \$100 per student attending a Catholic High School. Mike stated this was an Archdiocese program and we only pay for those who are registered parishioners who attend Mass at our church. Each high school notifies us who has reported St. Thomas More as their home parish. This past year we refused to pay for those students who were not enrolled here or their families have not attended Sunday Mass in long time. *(We are going to put a brief write up in the bulletin regarding this program.)*

Fr. Bill stated he felt the entire registration process is too early. It is rush-rush-rush. Finance is being pushed to make a commitment and they don't have all the numbers in January. Our energy expenses are now unknown. Mike Gennett stated he had received an email earlier in the day that the health care costs won't be released until March.

Kathy Hornschemeier stated the process was done this time of the year so we can commit to keep our good teachers. She also understands 30 teachers are retiring at West Clermont this year. She felt this should be viewed as a concern. Fr. Bill also pointed out that there currently is a buyers market for Catholic school teachers. Many Catholic schools in our market and in Dayton are closing.

Jim Conrady brought up some concerns he received about another parish's finances while he was at a ball game there this weekend. He was approached twice about the condition of our parish's finances in relation to theirs. He felt there was a lot of concern at this parish as to what they were encountering. Mike Gennett stated he knew some of the issues at this parish and was certain they were under pressure from the diocese. They might to be able grow out of their problems over time, but doubt the diocese was willing to wait and accept that as a resolution. Fr. Bill understood some of their bills had not been paid. Mike said he understood this too including the Catholic Telegraph program.

Energy Update – Mike reported the February Cinergy bill came on Friday. The bill for all 9 meters was \$5,644.99 compared to \$6,445.97 last year. Our bill was down 12% and we saved \$800.98. Our conservation program is

helping coupled with a very warm January this year. Fr. Bill stated the bitter cold weather this past weekend probably will have a negative impact on our next bill. Jim Conrady asked how the church building did. Mike stated he has not compared the bill building by building. The bills came on Friday afternoon and he immediately compared the totals, but not the specifics.

New Phone System Update – Mike stated he and Fr. Bill are in the process of looking at new phone systems. Vision Communication has already submitted a bid. This company has installed their system in a number of churches in our area. Fr. Bill and Mike will be visiting the Cincinnati Bell showroom next week. Spectrum Networks is coming this Friday. Fr. Bill and Mike visited St. Luke's in Beavercreek to look at their AltiGen IP phone system. 3Com is yet to be called. No decisions have been made as the market is being shopped. Mike stated he had polled the Business Managers about any new phone systems in their locations. We are looking at new systems that have been recently been successfully installed in similar facilities. Fr. Bill stated he is amazed at what some of these phones systems do.

Duane Bradley asked if we are looking at voice over IP. More can be done with voice over IP than over normal analog phone lines. Mike stated not all of our buildings have IP wiring such as the gym, More Martyr Hall, and the Rectory. There would be a cabling expense added to the cost. The gym and More Martyr Hall have no need for this kind of wiring. Phones are used just for emergency calls. There are no PCs there. Cincinnati Bell was also discouraging an IP system. Mike stated we don't know where we will end up until all the systems have been reviewed and bids have been received. We are looking at everything. The Visions proposal is a combination of both analog and IP.

Bingo – Mike stated Bingo has had a very good month. There has been a major turnaround. On February 2, we had 213 players and cleared \$2,126. The next two weeks we had over 120 players and cleared nearly \$1,300 each night. Jim Conrady asked what caused the turnaround. Mike stated the Bingo Committee met and targeted February as "Freebruary" which helped to pack the hall thru an aggressive marketing effort. We also understand an all smoking Thursday Bingo closed down in Milford and the other Thursday Bingo on Rt. 125 is not doing well. Fr. Bill said we may have to be the smoker's bingo. He also stated this turnaround may solve

some of our budget issue for next year. Mike stated we have been informed there is a bill in the state legislature that would outlaw smoking at bingos in Ohio.

Food Spoilage Policy – Mike stated a cafeteria food spoilage policy was transmitted last week. No questions were raised.

Paper Recycling – There is a paper recycling program that we would like to add. There is no cost to the parish and we can receive up to \$20 per ton if we collect 8 tons or more in a month. The containers would be placed in our parking lot close to the scout buildings on the parking lot. The school would be responsible for the program and collect any earnings. IHM and many West Clermont schools were all going to participate. The only concern might be over saturation of the program.

Addressing our Non-Donors – Mike passed out a chart showing our donors numbers by dollar amounts and number of donors by each amount for the past year. The number of school families was also extracted by amount.

Out of 1475 registered families, 583 of these households donated nothing in the past calendar year. A consulting firm called Cunneen has a successful program in getting these families to respond to their parishes. St. Mary's in Hyde Park just completed the first part of this program. They had about 450 active households they never heard from. They received 91 responses who pledged a combined \$4,000 a month. The part of their program where the donations are made has yet to start. If the program is not successful and we do not collect more than the costs of the program, the parish does not owe anything. It is a win-win. We have printed out a list of every single donor transaction in the past year. Those who are coming to church, for example, and maybe are donating only a dollar a week or depositing an empty envelope would not be included in the program. Each family's record will be closely reviewed. This program was approved by the Finance Committee and should kick off by mid-March.

Regarding school family donations, Mike said Our Lady of Visitation on the west side of town had implemented a successful program in the past year to address this issue. Mike passed out a copy of their letter and their donor card. He stated their families had concerns at first and those who

were not meeting the objective got a warning they had to catch up or would be charged out of parish tuition. They held the line and everyone finally came on board. It was noted that the majority of our school families do not contribute the difference between what it costs to educate a child and the tuition fee. Michelle Stultz was shocked at the number of our school families who do not contribute anything. She felt the cost issue was not known and is just another communication problem. The issue of playing games with the Sunday envelopes was brought up. Mike said there are a couple of things we do regarding envelopes. If a donation is dropped off at the office, it is recorded as a donation made at the office rather than a Sunday Offertory contribution. Those records are not printed when Mass attendance is looked at. Also, those who turn in multiple envelopes at one time are recorded as a single donation and attendance just for that Sunday. There is probably no way to stop those who double park and run in with their envelope without getting the ushers involved or have a friend or neighbor put their envelope in the collection basket.

Vic Ivers asked what was being asked of Council on this program. Mike asked for council's feedback. Duane Bradley said he liked it other than we need to take into account those who are truly needy. Mike said maybe those who feel they can not contribute should file a PSAS report. Jim Conrady stated he liked it because it was proactive. He further stated he had suggested implementing a similar program at a former parish where the cost to educate the child less contributions made would be the tuition amount paid. He asked Mike what would be the reaction at other neighboring parishes to this? Mike stated some of the parish in our area are "not there yet" for such a program. Plus besides how the Business Managers might feel may not be agreed to by a Principal and more importantly each Pastor. The real problem lies with what would our neighbors would do it we had such a program. Michelle Stultz said she works with two people who belong to Our Lady of Visitation and they clearly know about the program and what is required. It had been well communicated. It was decided that Mike would work on a proposed letter and card for our parish and have council review it at the next meeting. *(Update: Fr. Bill has asked that the final cost to educate each child be noted on our 2006-7 invoices with the parish subsidy deducted showing the net amount due.)*

Fr. Bill stated that the Protestant's have a membership list and you need to be active. He had also mentioned he attended the Mardi Gras ball at McNicholas High School on Sunday night and the kids were dressed in

tuxes and formal gowns. If families could afford this kind of cost, they should be able to pay their tuition and also help their parish.

This opened up the conversation regarding the tuition issue from 2000-1. Over 22% of our school families were 60 or more days behind. Many were not paying tuition and had not done so for years. 9 families were finally put into collections after six months of written numerous warnings. All the monthly payment bills that were mailed and ignored were converted to automatic payments. All this caused a lot of hard feelings but it resolved the problem. Now, once in a while a tuition payment does not go through. Excuses range from the need to make a boat payment to getting over extended at Christmas. These excuses are not accepted and the family is told the tuition is now past due and must be paid. Very few issues arise such as job loss or major family illness without health care. Those cases are accommodated on a one on one basis. The point is we managed through this and resolved it. We would have to do the same thing with a school contribution card.

Mike concluded by stating we have to look at new ways to save money and raise money in the future. We can learn from success stories elsewhere in addition to implementing our own ideas. We can't just rely on past programs to get us through.

Pastor's Report – Fr. Bill gave his update.

Pastoral Region update – Fr. Bill asked Duane Bradley to give the update on the recent meeting. Duane stated there was a minor change to the proposed Sunday Mass schedule. Michelle Stultz said we would have to keep the parking situation in mind if this happens. Bottom line is with this proposal is it may not happen for years or could be changed by the new Pastor.

Fr. Bill stated we might be able to keep all our Masses if the Comboni's are willing to help out. We could also have a winter schedule and a summer schedule. Fr. Bill stated some resort parishes already do this. This could mesh with the Comboni's summer mission schedule and we might be able to have that extra Mass back during the winter.

Duane stated it was agreed that the Pastor's salary and expenses would be shared between the parishes. It will be split as a percent based upon the size of the parishes. All other expenses and the budgets will remain separate. The various meeting frequencies would be determined by this Pastor when the two parishes begin to share a Pastor.

Fr. Bill reported that St. Louis in Owensville is still upset we can market our school in the Batavia area. They would like to see the pastoral region structure changed. Fr. Bill said he has reminded everyone it was their plan....one Pastor/one school in each Pastoral region.

CRHP - The Women's CRHP this past weekend was very successful. 15 women went thru. We have now put over 150 parishioners through the program since it was implemented in 2001-2.

Presbyter Council - The latest from the Presbyter Council of the Archdiocese includes the Archbishop announcing that the diocese has taken over some parish budgets and plans in order to pay their debts. Fr. Bill stated he was appointed Chairman of the next Convocation of Priests. They get together every five years. He is in charge of the program and for arranging speakers. Jim Conrady suggested maybe Marvin Lewis or Lou Holtz could be considered as speakers.

Worship - Fr. Bill stated he has given an assignment to the Worship Committee to identify those who come to the altar at communion time asking for a Pyx. There is a need to have a more specific program so the Blessed Sacrament is not getting into the wrong hands.

Faith Formation Room - Fr. Bill stated that the school has proposed taking over the Faith Formation Room next year for the second 6th grade class. The school feels it is important to have all the Jr. High students near the Principal's office. Fr. Bill said his feelings were the parish could not do without that room. Duane Bradley also agreed. Fr. Bill stated if the enrollment is such and we need a second 6th grade classroom, he had been looking at Library space and moving the Library to the center of Heider Hall. Kathy Hornschemeier felt that might be a security issue with books walking out the door. Michelle Stultz wondered why the empty classroom in the modular building can not be used. She would rather see the second class there instead of disrupting the rest of the school. Duane Bradley agreed that the empty classroom should be used first before anything is

moved. It was also pointed out that the Faith Formation Room is not a full size classroom. Fr. Bill stated he can not move Becky Ready back into a tiny office behind the Confessional. She is a full time staff member responsible for many programs. Kathy Hornschemeier stated if we have an empty classroom, we need to use it.

Fr. Bill stated he did not know what we would do if the school continued to grow. He could ask the Archdiocese permission for us to have a capital program to raise \$1,000,000 for more classrooms that ignores our current debt. He does not know if they would make an exception for us. Also, we don't know the future growth patterns of Catholic schools.

Misc. - Fr. Bill also reported that the Archbishop is holding focus group meetings with staff at selected locations. He and Mike Gennett would be attending one of these meetings this Thursday night.

New Business - Jim Conrady asked if there was a basement in Heider Hall. He felt there are two areas the floor is soft. One is in the rear section in the center and on the right side as well. Mike Gennett said he would have maintenance take a look.

He also gave a plug regarding the May 13th Parish Golf outing. He would like to see more participation from parishioners.

Vic Ivers asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Duane Bradley made the motion and Michelle Stultz seconded it. Council voted 6 to 0 to adjourn.

The next meeting is scheduled on Monday, March 20, at 7 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 PM. Fr. Bill led with a brief prayer.