

**ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH  
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
Monday, January 22, 2007**

**Council Members in Attendance:** Fr. Bill Wagner, Kathy Hornschmeier, Janet Tate, Ralph Bedel, John Duncan, Jim Conrady, and Larry Bush.

**Council Members Absent:** Vic Ivers.

**Others in Attendance:** Mike Gennett.

The St. Thomas More Parish Council meeting was called to order by Fr. Bill Wagner at 7:10 PM EST with a prayer. Kathy Hornschemeier conducted the meeting on behalf of Vic Ivers who was out of town.

**Business Manager Report:** Mike Gennett gave the report:

**Finance Update - 2006-7 Budget -** We may have a small surplus at the end of this year provided there are no major unforeseen expenses that might materialize. Many things are currently working in our favor:

- Sunday collections are up 5% over last year
- School tuition is achieving plan, although we do have a few families that consistently are late. Each delinquency is addressed and the payment is made within two weeks.
- Our energy costs and snow and ice removal is way below plan. However, we still have a large part of winter to go through.
- Our state administrative reimbursement will be up slightly due to an increase in the school enrollment.
- The following capital projects have been completed and paid for: email server, surge protectors, and the new rectory roof. The lighting addition in the church Sanctuary installation will begin next Monday and is included in this year's budget projection.
- All the school fundraising programs and the Latch Key program have had outstanding results to date.

- Our total expenses once the debt & interest payments and the 2005 bingo loan are accounted for is actually down \$16,000 over the same period in the fall of 2005. However, the diocese assessment for this year will increase by \$15,000 so these savings will not be able to be used here.

And a few things have not done as well as we would have liked:

- And as previously stated the diocese assessment has increased by \$15,000 this year without any prior notice. It will continue to increase each year. The tax last year was 5.7% of income, 7.2% this year, 8.2% next year, and eventually topping out at 8.7%. All our income is taxed except for school tuition.

Mike started that the Finance Committee was meeting the following morning to discuss the proposed budget for next year. An update would be provided at the next Parish Council meeting.

Mike also stated that the Archdiocese Finance Director made a presentation to the Business Managers last week regarding the Archdiocese financial situation. The matter is very serious and will continue to impact the parishes. The parishes collectively owe the diocese over \$100,000,000.00. Over \$28,000,000.00 of that amount is delinquent and increasing. The diocese has been working with those parishes that have had problems paying their bills and debts. It has gone so well there has been some discussion about the diocese getting involved in other parish budgets. As long as we continue to manage our funds in a professional manner, it is doubted they would want to get involved with us.

Lastly, Finance will be reviewing two bids for replacing the windows in Heider Hall. A final decision will not be made until around March 1. If this is approved, the work will be completed in June. Jim Conrady suggesting using volunteers to replace the windows. Fr. Bill pointed out that a local parish exclusively used volunteers to build their buildings to save money and they have all kinds of structural issues today. It was agreed that this kind of work needs to be professionally completed.

**St. Veronica In-Parish School Program** – Mike passed out the St. Veronica In-Parish Tuition Criteria policy for review. A few charts were shared showing the successful results of their program.

St. Veronica has reported a surge in their Sunday collections as a result. (Our Sunday collection was slightly bigger than theirs prior to this program.) In essence, letters were written to those school families who do not attend Sunday Mass and contribute to the parish that they would be considered for out of parish tuition unless they began to comply. St. Veronica is not the first parish to have such a program. Our Parish Council and Finance Committee approved a similar program a year ago. However, the School Committee felt it would be a negative with school registrations starting.

Two spread sheets were passed out showing the range of our total parish contributions and school family contributions for calendar year 2006.

Regarding the parish contribution spread, Fr. Bill reported he had just returned from a seminar. Our parish spread was right with the national average. That is, 30% are very active, 30% are somewhat active, and 40% are actively disengaged from the parish. It was suggested at the seminar that contribution spread not be communicated to the parish at large. Rather, they suggested the numbers who volunteer by ministry should be published. This also helps to grow the number of volunteers in a parish when those who are not volunteering see the numbers and feel they need to get involved.

It was agreed that the school contribution list was a “no brainer”. Council approved proceeding with our own program to address those school families that do not attend Sunday Mass and contribute to the parish. *(On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Finance Committee also approved implementing the program with a fall 2007 kickoff date.)*

**Risk Assessment** – The Archdiocese conducted a thorough risk assessment last Friday. We did very well. No major concerns were reported. Most of the things they asked to have corrected were very minor in nature.

**New Business** – Jim Conrady reported there are still problems with the **microphones in church**, especially the ambo mic. He would like to take a look at the system and see what he can do.

**Council Meeting Feedback** - Ralph Bedel wanted to discuss the feedback that has been received regarding the parish council meetings and minutes. Ralph stated the parishioners who are complaining need to address their concerns in person directly to council. Ralph proposed that the next time someone has an issue they need to be invited to attend the next Council meeting to address their concerns in person. Everyone agreed that this is the way it will be handled in the future.

It was discussed that Council meetings are open forums to discuss both the positive and negative issues affecting the parish. How do we fix the problems if we don't know what they are? Everything we deal with is not a "slam dunk". Fr. Bill pointed out that there is a parish where the Pastor does not listen to his Parish Council nor has a Finance Committee and the parish problems are growing and growing. St. Thomas More is a large parish and everything that affects it must be brought to the table.

It was also pointed out a number of schools in the diocese are closing at the end of this year. We need to keep all the issues on the table that will help our school to continue to grow and prosper.

**Pastor's Report** – Fr. Bill discussed his recent attendance at a seminar conducted by ISPD which is a major church stewardship and planning firm. They are experts in offering suggestions on growing a parish. Some of the things they discussed include:

- How to reach out to everyone in a parish
- Pastor coffees with parishioners
- Pastor visits to new parishioners in their homes
- Many teams are established to hand off projects to get accomplished
- Conduct surveys at Mass and at home
- Have breakfast and dinner meetings – picnics – coffee & donuts
- Have a parish directory (one parish even has mailboxes for every family)

- Have a parish mission statement...circle the words that stand out. Use those words to build a new statement. Edit from there
- Have an extensive parish web site

Fr. Bill pointed out they gave a lot of good suggestions. Many of these things we are doing now and do well. There were also many things we could do to improve our parish. The one issue is with the priest shortage, where is the time going to be found to make this happen? There was a lot of information presented we need to think about.

Fr. Bill said we are doing well considering the times. We are operating in the black and pay all our bills and make our debt payments. We also are blessed with families who had been visionaries in the past. Think about our church that was built in 1960-1. It was called "Cathedral in the Cornfield". It was so much bigger than the needs of the parish at that time. Without that church today, we would have been in trouble. This visionary spirit can be tapped for growth in the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 PM. Fr. Bill led the group in a prayer.

**NEXT MEETING - MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19<sup>TH</sup> - 7:00 PM**