

**ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, February 20, 2012**

Council Members in Attendance: Fr. Bill Wagner, Vic Ivers, Kathy Hornschemeier, Larry Bush, John Duncan, Janet Tate, and Sam DeBonis.

Council Members Absent: Jim Conrady.

Others in Attendance: Mike Gennett.

The St. Thomas More Parish Council meeting was called to order by Vic Ivers at 7:00 PM EST. Fr. Bill Wagner opened with a prayer.

Business Manager Report: Mike Gennett gave the report.

Since the last council meeting, **the Finance Commission** met. They approved the first draft budget for 2012-2013. The budget at this time is a break even budget. The budget will be revised again in late May based upon the school registration numbers. A 3% increase in tuition was approved. The Cafeteria lunch fee may be increased next year based upon the new Federal guidelines for school lunches. A decision will be made later. All other fees remain the same as they are for this year including PSR fees.

Our email server has seen better days. It has crashed a number of times in recent months. We are looking at a couple of options to replace it including Office 365. There are some non-profit agreements available. The parish and school will also be converting to Microsoft Office 2010 very soon. We were able to obtain charity licenses for this upgrade.

The IRS has notified a few parishes they are doing complete audits of their financial operations. The audits are two days in length and they are focusing on 2009. We have not received a notification regarding such an

extensive audit. There has been a crack down on payroll and taxes in all churches.

School Registrations for next year are underway. Enrolling in the new **monthly tuition payment system provider, FACTS**, is going well so far. Families wishing to pay on the monthly payment plan are finding the link and registering on line.

The stewardship campaign continues to bear fruit. Through February 19, we are up \$8,276.54 to plan and \$47,828.98 over last year. This does not include onetime capital gifts which are more than double from a year ago. This increase helps us to continue to address our capital needs.

We just did a **complete audit of our roofs** and repairs will be needed in the future to the back dome area of Heider Hall, the area over the lobby area of the gym, and some minor repairs over the Cafeteria and the School Library. Current estimate for all the work is \$47,500. All our other roofs are in good shape.

Bids are currently being obtained for the School Library improvements. The school wants to move the computer lab to the library and condense the Library. This would entail new carpet, stock rooms being built, wiring, reading pit filled in, etc. The PTO has offered to pay for this work. If this is approved, it would not take place until after school is out. One key reason for the move is to gain another classroom for use, the current computer lab.

Archbishop Schnurr has announced **the new centralized accounting platform**. St. Thomas More will be one of approximately 20-25 pilot locations to first make the transition. Training is scheduled to start March 8. Right now, each of the pilot locations are required to map their current chart of accounts to the new diocese centrally established chart of accounts. This is a major first-step so current information can be correctly transferred and processed in the new system. Patience will be required as we make this transition. Two sets of books will be kept for a short period of time to ensure accuracy.

The Business Managers recently received an extensive presentation on the new Child Protection Program called Virtus. Archbishop Schnurr has

notified all locations in a letter of his support for the transition to this program.

- It will take at least two years to get the new program implemented. The goal is to have it totally in place by the time the next Bishop's audit takes place in October 2014. All employees and volunteers currently approved in the Child Protection Decree program will have to be re-certified in the new Virtus program.
- The October 2011 National Catholic Conference of Bishop's audit showed our diocese in compliance to the Child Protection Decree, but our program in their opinion is very outdated.
 - We are using an outdated video with Archbishop Pilarczyk and Fr. Joe Binzer before he became a Bishop
 - We were not using the Virtus system like most other dioceses.
- Virtus (Latin for "excellent") is currently used by 77 dioceses. The audit stated that Cincinnati is very far behind all the other dioceses in managing the child protection program.
 - Virtus is owned by the National Catholic Services
 - They have a library of videos and training that is up to date
 - Videos include those who have been convicted and are now in jail
 - They utilize best practices in this field
 - They set consistent standards for everyone, diocese by diocese
 - Their training when you see it is very powerful
 - They go beyond child abuse....bullying, touching safety, and verbal abuses are also covered to name a few
 - Sign up is on line at the diocese level in many dioceses
 - All the dioceses around Cincinnati are already using Virtus
 - Virtus requires all school children to be trained
 - If you complete the Virtus process anywhere in the US, you are certified and each Parish will be able to access that national database.
 - The initial training is 3 hours - all employees and volunteers have to go through it even if they have completed the original

45 minute class~ class sizes are limited because there are breakout sessions

- There is follow-up training required – after you go through the initial session, you establish an online user name and password. An email automatically comes each month. You are required to read the bulletin and answer the questions ~ The answers are multiple choice ~ You are then scored ~ You must complete this process each month in order to remain certified ~ if you miss two months in a row, you are no longer certified in the child protection program and you must immediately stop working or volunteering with children
 - You must complete this exercise every month even if you are not working (off for the summer) or volunteering (coaching one sport for just a couple of months). You are no longer in compliance if you fail to do this two months in a row
- Transition to Virtus
 - 79,000 names currently are in the Cincinnati diocese database ~ each parish will get a list of everyone on file for their location from the diocese around March 1 ~ parish must audit the file, name by name and note who has left the parish ~ List must be returned by May 1
 - Diocese will update their lists from the parish and download the audited list into the Virtus system prior to the June 17-18 initial training for leaders
 - Diocese will form a network from the parishes to assist in managing and updating compliance
 - Parishes will receive a database to manage compliance
 - Parishes may have to provide computers to parishioners to complete their monthly email training updates....not everyone has a computer
 - National Virtus trainers coming in to train 250 for 2 days in Centerville June 17 - 18
 - The people attending this session will be asked to initially train other parish facilitators, not their parishioners
 - Diocese is paying transition costs
 - Fingerprinting

- There are no changes to the fingerprinting policy at this time~ everyone must continue to submit to a criminal background check ~ This remains a separate piece of the process
- The policy of bring re-fingerprinted if you change locations to work or volunteer remains in effect
- The Oct 2011 Bishop's audit asked that our diocese begin to require all employees and volunteers to be re-fingerprinted every 3 or 5 years. We started to fingerprint in 2003 and we need to verify if someone's record has changed over the years
 - Our diocese has declined to set this as a policy at this time but it will happen in the near future
- Diocese is changing the current fingerprint policy May 1. No one can be fingerprinted without written approval in advance by the parish on a diocese form. The volunteer or employee that wants to work with children at specific location needs to obtain a signed form. If someone goes to be fingerprinted without a signed approval form must begin to pay their own background check costs. Ohio BCI is \$28 and if a FBI is required it is another \$30. (This is to stop numerous fingerprint reports for the same individual being charged to the home parish.) If someone does not need a fingerprint check at a location, they will not receive a signed approval form. The volunteer must get the signature from the location requesting the check if the volunteer wants that location to pay the cost.
- The diocese his hired a new Child Protection Coordinator, Tom Coz. He is now on board and will be managing the program for the diocese.
 - Mr. Coz plans to spend time studying Virtus in the Indianapolis, Columbus, and Covington dioceses. They converted to Virtus a long time ago.

John Duncan stated he wondered if there was a way that fingerprint files can be retained and just updated rather than put everyone through the process again.

- Web sites

- To view the Virtus web site (even though passwords are required, you can see some things):
<http://www.virtus.org/virtus/>
- Look at the Covington web site....
<http://www.covingtondiocese.org/> look at Child Protection steps on the left side
 - We were told if you fall off the list in the Covington diocese, you are out ~ no exceptions ~ ongoing certification is in each employee and volunteer hands

We will be having our first pastoral staff meeting tomorrow to discuss implementation here. We anticipate the Virtus change around July 1 which will mean we will not be able to process new volunteers and employees without a plan in place. The first event that could be affected is Bible Camp in early August.

Today, parishioners want to be certified at 3PM, fingerprinted at 4PM, and volunteer at 5PM. That will be impossible in the future. Individual, "private one on one" child protection classes will not be possible with the new system. Classes are designed for 30 individuals at one time although they can be taken anywhere in the United States when offered. Advance planning on the part of the volunteer will be required.

More information about Virtus will be presented in the months ahead.

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

There is not much new in the Deanery. St. Columbkille in Wilmington and the four clustered parishes of St. Philomena, St. Louis, Holy Trinity, and St. Ann are on the open listing for a new Pastor starting July 1.

We continue to seek funding for a new handicap ramp in the front of church.

Our festival team is starting to meet. Fr. Bill is unaware of any changes to the festival from last year. The 2012 event will probably be very similar to the successful 2011 festival. The group is looking to install permanent

electrical hookups on the north side of the parking lot. The wiring is getting old and probably cannot be used much longer or at all.

The diocese athletic initiative committee is meeting. Fr. Bill stated we need to be careful not to add any more changes in the short term. Parishes are very busy now with the accounting and Virtus changes now looming. Plus the school initiative will be released in the fall. We need to be careful not to overload parishes too many changes at one time.

Lent starts on Wednesday and this Sunday is the Rite of Sending.

We are hosting a Boy Scout Merit Badge Challenge for three upcoming Saturdays. We are continuing to work to get the required child protection certificates on file.

Bob Brazier is in the LPM program at the seminary. He would like to apply to the deaconate program. Council members were emailed a document to complete and return to Fr. Bill regarding Bob's application.

Pastoral Region Planning Update - Kathy Hornschemeier gave the update.

An updated document was emailed to all the parish council members prior to the meeting. It is the final document that will be submitted to the Archbishop for his approval once both parish councils have approved the plan.

The updated document contained the following additions from what was presented in January:

- The definition of a "Vibrant Church"
- A statement on the condition of the facilities of both parishes
- A statement regarding finances. Each parish will continue to run independently. The only shared expenses will be that of the Pastor. Each parish will contribute 50% to the costs including living expenses. It was also stated the Pastor could live on either campus.

- A statement on Faith Formation. Confirmation could be combined at the Cathedral. RCIA and PSR would remain independent.
- The schools are not involved in this exercise.

The committee is also asking that any new Pastor assigned to our region accept this plan for the first year before making any changes. Fr. Bill added this is a normal procedure when a new priest starts a new assignment.

The next steps include both Parish Councils approving the plan. Then, once that has transpired, the plan is sent to the Archbishop for his approval.

Fr. Bill pointed out this plan may not go into effect for a number of years, if ever. The point is we need to have a plan in place that if the priest shortage becomes so critical that the Archbishop can no longer assign a priest to both parishes we have a plan ready to implement.

Fr. Bill further stated that a pastoral region means we are only sharing a Pastor. We are not implying we are combining or sharing anything else.

Vic Ivers asked if council was ready to vote on approving the plan as presented. Kathy Hornschemeier made a motion to accept the plan as written. Vic Ivers seconded the motion. The vote was 6 to 0 to accept the pastoral regional plan as written.

Fr. Bill stated the next step would be for St. Bernadette's Parish Council to approve the plan. The contents of the plan are confidential until St. Bernadette Parish approves the plan and the Archbishop subsequently approves it.

Kathy Hornschemeier made a motion to adjourn. Larry Bush seconded the motion. The meeting ended at 8:26 PM. Fr. Bill led the group in a prayer.

THE NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY, MARCH 19TH.