

**ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, January 21, 2008**

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

Council Members Absent: John Duncan.

Others in Attendance: Mike Gennett and John Convery.

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:

The 2007 contribution letters will be mailed by the end of this week to all households that contributed at least a total of \$250 last year. 2007 is the first year the IRS will require a letter from the tax payer's church or the donor must have proof denoting each donation on their bank statement. The school Sunday Mass and contribution record for 2007 will be mailed along with the contribution statements in order to save postage costs.

First Half 2007-2008 Review - Overall, we are doing better than last year and to plan. If nothing out of the ordinary happens between now and June 30th, we should be in good shape for the year. A lot will depend on the weather, any impact due to the sub-prime mortgage crisis, and the absence of any major maintenance issues. Some of the results include:

The **Sunday collection** is up. On a comparative basis, through January 20, 2008, we are ahead of plan by \$8,210.28 and also ahead of last year by 6.1%. This is remarkable since many parishes are not running ahead and just are struggling. However, if history proves to be true, we will end up flat to plan for the year. We do well from December until mid-spring. By the time we get to May, Mass attendance drops off and we no longer make

plan. We have to continue to build our electronic contribution base to help carry us through the slower times.

School tuition is doing better than plan. We have one family that is fairly far behind on their tuition. They claimed in the past it is not a hardship case and refused to apply for financial assistance. Obviously this is being addressed. We can't meet our financial obligations if tuition is not paid.

Our administrative cost reimbursement from the state of Ohio for the school has gone up.

On the expense side, the staff is doing an excellent job of controlling expenses.

Our utility costs are up. This is due to the extremely hot weather from July through October. Our air conditioning ran more than it usually does during this time frame. The Heider Hall windows have done a nice job keeping the school heat in the building.

There are no capital projects planned in our current budget this year. We feel our capital money will have to be used to comply with the new state law regulating schools, Jarrod's Law. We are waiting for our first inspection to see what we may be required to do first. We have gone ahead and done some minor changes that do not require funding. On the other hand, there are many requirements in the law that will cost money. Just one example of the many rules... we have to have detailed blue prints of our school roofs to review with the state. The price to have those blue prints drawn up is \$3,500. In addition to the start up cost, we have to have two semi-annual roof inspections by a "qualified roofer". The Legislature did not define what this meant. Also, we are required to have all our roofs inspected by this "qualified roofer" after each major storm. All this has to be on file for review. It will take years for all the schools in the state to comply with this law.

2008-2009 Budget – Tomorrow, Finance will meet on next year's budget. Right now, we have a very small deficit planned. This number will change once we get into the school enrollment season and the school budget solidifies.

The budget includes:

- One less Sunday next year than this year
- A 5% general increase in school tuition – no increase in any other fees
- 10% increase in health insurance premiums
- 20% increase in pension costs that cover the rate increase from 5% to 6% of payroll
- Fingerprinting costs will rise by 20%
- Property insurance will rise by as much as 16% to cover the diocese mandated school student only insurance
- No increase planned in workers comp, although we have been told it may go up July 1.
- No capital projects

There are a few savings.....

- A \$1,000 decrease for the Catholic Telegraph program
- A 50% decrease in the High School Equalization. This program will be phased out in 2009-2010.

There could be more information provided this week. The Business Managers have a meeting on Wednesday with the Archdiocese Finance Director.

Even with the proposed increase in our school tuition fees, we still will be below most east side area parishes. There are no increases planned for Kindergarten and the registration fees. Out of parish tuition is proposed to rise for the first time in a number of years. We have the lowest out of parish tuition in the area.

The school is projecting an enrollment of 346 from 319. They are also proposing adding another teacher in Jr. High. Our budget is based upon this year's enrollment of 319. However, the final school budget will be based upon actual enrollments rather than using a projection. We have

been successful funding the school to their actual enrollment. If we hire first, and enroll later, we would be obligated to pay the teachers regardless of the enrollment. This could cause a nasty turn in our finances.

The biggest issue we have with getting the school enrollments turned in is with returning families. They seem to procrastinate until the last minute. This does not help us to wrap up our school budget in a timely manner and get the teacher hired that we need.

Catholic Ministries Campaign – The CMA will kick off in February. The campaign will fund six ministries: Catholic Social Services, Campus Ministries, Chaplains for Hospitals & Prisons, Pastoral Education, Retired Priests, and St. Rita School for the Deaf. This was known as the Archdiocese Fund Drive in the past. We will continue to do a direct mail campaign as we have always successfully done. Our goal is \$24,500. There are a couple of changes this year. First, parishioners can directly contribute electronically to the diocese. Secondly, for every dollar donated over our goal, 10% of that amount will be applied against our parish debt.

Capital Campaign Update – Mike has met with three companies regarding making a proposal for the capital fund raising campaign to build the connector between the west side of the church and the gym. Those companies are:

McCarthy & Associates, Southfield Michigan
Cunneen, Hamden, CT
RSI, Dallas, TX

They are all experts in their field. McCarthy was the consulting firm used for Phase I in the late 1990s and also worked with many of us to turn around our Sunday collections a few years ago. Cunneen worked with us on the inactive “active” household files in 2006. RSI is the firm the diocese uses. We have had no experience with them.

The next step is to schedule the three presentations to a group of parishioners that would include Parish Council, Finance, School Board, and a few other key parishioners.

The issue at hand is: should they be scheduled on three different nights or all on one day? There are pluses and minuses to doing so. If they are all on one day, we could lose people by the end of the day. However, we need everyone to review each presentation. If they are done on different nights, you might not get everyone to attend each of the nights. If we do them on one day, we can set a time limit on the amount of time for each presentation with a second time limit on questions. Council decided after a discussion that Sunday might be the best day. Start Sunday afternoon around 1:30-2:00 PM. Serve a meal. Fr. Bill's schedule needs to be checked first. We plan to ask Finance the same question on Tuesday morning. Once we set the date, we need to determine who will be invited to the meeting.

Larry Bush suggested that the company backgrounds be sent out in advance. Mike Gennett agreed to email that information to those who will be attending the meetings.

A discussion took place about the recent news regarding the US economy. This may not be the time to kick off a fund raising campaign. The stock market is down nearly 10% in January. Housing and Banks are in a crisis. This concern will also be discussed with Finance.

Stephen Ministry - John Convery made a presentation regarding the Stephen Ministry.

John introduced the concept to council. He has a ten year background in this ministry dating back to Guardian Angels parish. In a nutshell, the ministry is walking hand in hand with someone when they are going through a difficult time in their life. It is being a caregiver. It can be anonymous help.

The process starts informally for about an hour. The caregiver does not solve the problem. They offer compassion. The issues can include death in the family, job loss, health issues.

In addition to John, parishioner Peggy Lockwood is trained in this ministry. Training can be expensive. However, we already have two parishioners trained in this ministry.

Fr. Bill stated this is an opportunity to start from scratch with two trained leaders. He is very interested in seeing this take place.

Council gave an informal go ahead to pursue this new ministry.

Holiday Meetings – The issue of holding Parish Council meetings on Federal holidays was discussed. The next scheduled meeting is February 18th and is President’s Day. This is the last third Monday (which is when council meets) in the month until next January when a holiday falls on Council’s scheduled date. A decision was made not to hold the meeting on February 18.

The next meeting will be March 17th even though it is Holy Week. Every organization and Pastoral Staff member will be asked to complete an update report regarding their activities. Mike Gennett said the list serv needs to be updated and he will work on it. We don’t always get everyone’s new email address when they change it.

Winterfest – A lot of positive comments were made about Winterfest. The numbers were not in, but the Lasagna dinner and the carnival reportedly had done well.

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

Mike Gennett received a proposed document from the diocese that will be discussed at the Business Managers meeting this week regarding **use of parish property when school is not in session during the summer**. There is entire cadre of rules governing what can transpire including how fees are collected and payroll is processed for any out of the ordinary events. Fr. Bill stated the diocese continues to tighten all the rules on how the various properties are to be managed. Parishioners come and ask him to make an exception and he cannot do that. He does not have the authority

to overrule the diocese. If he did, and something unfortunate happened, he could personally be liable. Once this summer policy has been put to bed, Fr. Bill wants an insert prepared for the bulletin noting all the policy changes we must live with. Parishioners need to know how things are changing and everyone must comply. Some think it is our policies and they are not. The bottom line is the diocese continues to tighten everything up.

Jerry Cain has retired. He plans to spend more time with his family. **John Convery** is on board working three days a week. He will begin to work four days a week July 1. John is also the part time Business Manager at St. John Fisher in Newtown.

The Worship Commission is going to discuss the issue of **Sunday weddings**. A Sunday wedding has been booked for 2009. There are lots of issues regarding weddings on a Sunday. Fr. Bill stated this is not the start of a new precedent with this one wedding that is currently being planned.

The **Parish Office will be open on Sunday** mornings during the school year (except holiday weekends) from 9 AM until 12 Noon beginning this Sunday, January 27th. Leslie Molitor, a former parish secretary, will staff the office. Leslie will also be doing some work for Mike Gennett since he does not have a secretary or bookkeeper. The Business Manager job continues to grow and more help is needed.

Fr. Bill said he attend **the Archbishop's 25th Anniversary Mass** in December. The press did not accurately portray what happened. Yes, attendance was light. However, the diocese limited the number who could attend by issuing tickets. Late notice was also given to the parishes. Plus the weather was bad that day and we have to remember over half of our parishes are in Dayton and to the north. Even Cardinals and Bishops from around the country could not get out of their area to make it.

Not much new in **the Deanery**. There is some conversation we should switch Deaneries. We are much larger than all the other parishes and have nothing in common with them. We have far more in common with the neighboring parishes to the west of us. Right now, Fr. Bill would like to sit on this until after the bishop change that may be coming.

The **Archbishop is eligible for retirement** in August 2009. No one knows what will happen or who may come in if he does retire.

Regarding **Pastoral Regions**, Fr. Bill doubts it will happen here soon. Others in the Deanery are ready to go plus our Deanery has given up more than others to date.

Financially, we are in good shape and plan to stay that way.

A request has come from another parish about buying our **Bingo equipment**. Council gave the go ahead to pursue this.

The **More Martyr Hall** tucking point has been completed and we are waiting for the roofer. This is a terrible time of the year to complete outside work.

New Business – Janet Tate said she had a couple of issues.

The second collection basket is a problem when there is a second collection. They get switched. People hang on to them. Money is getting deposited in the wrong basket. The announcement at the pulpit is no longer being made. Janet proposes the second collection basket not be passed until first collection is complete.

People continue to donate outdated food and opened food. All this food has to be thrown away. There was an announcement in the bulletin a few months ago and yet the problem persists.

A few months ago, the issue of the “Reserved Signs” for the church pews was brought up. Nothing has been done to solve the problem. The current signs do not stay in place.

Jim Conrady would like to see the visiting priests introduce themselves. Maybe an announcement at the beginning of Mass as to whom the priest is.

Kathy Hornschemeier stated the **Abitibi paper** bins are not being picked up in a timely manner. They are filled to the brim. Mike Gennett stated our use had really fallen off and they called asking for a plan to turn it around. We made some announcements and the papers have since poured in. Mike said he would call for a pick up.

Vic Ivers made a motion to adjourn. Kathy Hornschemeier seconded it. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Next meeting is March 17th. Organization and staff reports are due in advance to council.