

Pastor's Column

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“Annual Catholic Appeal and the Operating Budget”

Thank you to Charles Salter and Ron Briseno who spoke this weekend at all the Masses on behalf of the Parish Finance and Development Councils.

Each year the Diocesan Annual Catholic Appeal takes place to raise needed funds for ongoing faith formation and service ministries within our Diocese.

The \$2.5 million contributed by all the parishes of the Diocese supports the mission of our local church and the Church of San Diego through “Education in the Faith,” “Priestly Ministry,” and “Catholic Charities.” In support of the ACA, the Church of St. Thomas More will contribute \$26,000 as its fair share for 2006. As a benefit to our Parish, the Diocese will return all funds collected over and above our goal amount.

The 2004 ACA returned \$48,000 to our Parish. This money was directed to our Building Fund and was very helpful in the purchase of the five acres of land adjacent to our parish campus. This purchase brought our campus from 10 to 15 acres and will provide us with additional parking and proper athletic fields for our parish school when it is built.

The 2005 ACA returned \$28,000 to our Parish. This money was directed to our Parish Reserve Account. The funds in this account will be available for major repairs in our Parish Center and on our campus, as they are needed. This is good planning and creates a “rainy day” fund for emergency situations and for repairs that are not a part of the ordinary operating budget. This Reserve Account is important especially as our Parish Center and campus begin to age. We have now been in our Parish Center for five years!

As was explained at all the Masses this weekend, the overage of the 2006 ACA will be directed to the Operating Budget to help in eliminating the shortfall that we are presently experiencing. At this time, we are 7% down in revenue from last fiscal year, and we are 10% below what we budgeted in revenue for this fiscal year.

Special recognition must be given to Don Eppich and members of our Finance Council who are addressing this issue “sooner rather

than later.” In our discussions at Finance Council, we concluded that there are a number of reasons why income is down:

1. The Capital Campaign is ahead in income beyond our projections—parishioners have responded very generously toward the building of the Church;
2. Parishioners have responded very generously to the many natural disasters that we have experienced in the past year—the parish monetary response just to Hurricane Katrina was almost \$30,000; and
3. Everyone has been hit hard by the price of a gallon of gas along with other utility increases.

With all this in mind, it is important that we address the present shortfall in our Operating Budget. Our present budget is lean, and there is not much room for “cuts.” But the Finance Council is reviewing the budget and all staff members have been requested to “hold the line” on any spending that is not absolutely necessary.

The ACA overage is an opportunity this year for us to “fix” this shortfall. Your generous gift to the ACA is extremely important this year. For the Parish to receive the Bishop’s approval to move forward with our building project, it is not only important that we have the necessary funds on hand to be approved for our loan, but our Operating Budget must also be “healthy.” We cannot be in deficit spending in the Operating Budget and expect to be approved for a building project. This fact reminds us of our mission as a Parish. We are not here to just build buildings. We are here to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus. The buildings are a means to that end, but the buildings are not an end in themselves.

In a week or so, you will be receiving my “love letter” regarding the ACA. You are asked to respond positively and generously. Your gift this year is extremely important as we “*journey into the future . . . together.*”

As always, know that I am extremely grateful for your generosity, support, and concern for the Church of St. Thomas More.

F. n. Mike