

Pastor's Column

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"St. Thomas More Rises to the Occasion Again and Again!"

This weekend at all the Masses, Charles Salter and Ron Briseno are speaking briefly at announcement time. Charles is a Member of the Finance Council, and Ron is the Chairperson of the Development Council.

They are giving us an update on our Operating Budget for this Fiscal Year 2005-2006, specifically in regard to our present income deficit that was first brought to the attention of the Parish in January, 2006.

This update follows the first update given by Bill Ipsen, our Capital Campaign Chairperson, which was given the weekend of March 11-12, 2006. The first update given by Bill reflected good news as does the update of this weekend!

In January 2006, it was reported that in this fiscal year we are experiencing a deficit of 7% in income from what we actually collected last year and 10% from what we budgeted for this year. It is important to keep in mind that that 10% equals \$100,000.

Also it is important to keep in mind that no matter how much money we have raised in the Capital Campaign, if we are not able to balance the Operating Budget in maintaining our present realities, the Bishop will not allow us to build and move forward with our plans.

As this report is given, it is extremely important to keep in mind that we presently have a very "bare-bones" budget. Every member of the Staff is aware of our situation and is very careful in all spending, avoiding what is not necessary.

Also, every Parishioner needs to know that all the members of our Staff are very dedicated and each of them works many more hours beyond her/his contractual agreement for which they are not compensated. This Staff is truly a gift to this Community and desires wholeheartedly to serve it as needed!

Bill Ipsen, in March 2006, shared with the Faith Community that there was a very positive response to our need to increase revenue to match not only the revenue from last year, but to catch up with the 3% revenue increase for this fiscal year.

In four specific ways, money is to be directed to our Operating Budget to address this shortfall: 1) *Designated gifts*; 2) *The overage of the Diocesan assessment to the Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA)*; 3) *An increase in weekly offertory contributions*; and 4) *Proceeds of the 2006 Golf Classic that will be held on June 16, 2006.*

This weekend's report reflects the good news that the revenue is continuing to increase and that we have begun to address this shortfall in a significant way in these last three months.

Designated Gifts

A number of Parishioners have come forward and given gifts over and above their normal offertory contributions that are designated specifically for the Operating Budget. These gifts total \$10, 697.

The Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA)

The ACA is a Diocesan Collection that raises \$2.5 million that is directed toward "Instruction in the Faith, Priestly Ministries, and Catholic Charities in our Diocese." Our fair share amount, this year, is \$26,000.

All money raised over and above this \$26,000 is returned to the Parish. In past years, our overage was directed to the Building Fund and to creating a Parish Reserve Account.

Presently 368 out of 1,021 households have responded to the ACA. This is 36% of our Parish Households. We have raised \$50,485.04. Less our \$26,000 assessment, at this time, \$24,485.04 will be directed to our Operating Budget.

A second mailing has just recently gone out in the hopes of increasing Parishioner participation. We need the help and the support of the other 63% of Parish households!

Increased Offertory Giving

It is difficult to track in terms of an actual total amount, but we are seeing that a number of households are increasing their weekly offertory contributions. If every household would increase its weekly offering by just \$1 that would mean a weekly increase of \$1,021. Multiply that amount by 52 weeks and we would experience a yearly increase of \$53,092! If everyone does just a little...

I am very happy to report that since our first report to the Parish in January we have experienced an 11% increase in our Offertory Collections for January, February, March, and April. It is important that this trend continues.

The 2006 St. Thomas More Golf Classic

The Seventh Annual St. Thomas More Golf Classic will take place on Friday, June 16. Hopefully, many of our golfers will be a part of this day and will invite family and friends to join in the fun.

The evening will close with a Dinner/Dance/Silent Auction/Live Auction right here in our Parish Center. So, even if you are not a golfer, you can join in the evening's festivities. Come for dinner, and invite your friends to join you. You are encouraged to reserve a table of 8 or 10 people. All proceeds from the day will be directed to the Operating Budget.

Golfers are signing up quickly and places for dinner are being reserved rapidly. Sign up and reserve now!

The opportunity to golf at Lake San Marcos Country Club has been well received and the decision to have the dinner in our Parish Center has been overwhelmingly positive.

It is our hope to raise \$50,000 in this event. We have done that in previous years (*thank you Larry Dorsa!*), and we can do it again.

All the information for the Golf Classic Day is available in the Parish Bulletin, at the Golf Table on the Plaza every weekend, and in the Parish Office.

It will be a fun day. Please be a part of it!

In these four areas, we are making significant progress in "eating away" at our deficit. The momentum needs to continue through the rest of this fiscal year into the next fiscal year.

The Finance Council is committed to keeping the expenses of the FY 2006-2007 Operating Budget the same as they have been this year. So with the positive Parish response, in a few more months, we will be "caught up" as we move into the new fiscal year.

I am extremely grateful for your very positive response to our present situation! If we continue in this spirit of cooperation and all do our part, we will easily maintain our mission and our ministries, and with confidence, move into the future together.

St. Thomas More rises to the occasion again and again! I am grateful.

F. Mike