

Pastor's Column

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“Did You Know?”

The task that lies before us, as a Parish, is formidable! We are a Faith Family of just over 1,000 households. Over the years, we have purchased 15 acres of land that has become our Parish Campus, and we have built a Parish Center that is 22,500 square feet. It is now five years old and on-going maintenance of this building is becoming more and more a factor in our budgeting process. At the same time, we have taken on the task of building our Church that will hopefully seat well over 1,000 people.

“*Our Journey Into The Future . . . Together*”, our Capital Campaign, is going well and we are exceeding our original income projections. Parishioners are eager to see our Church built and are responding accordingly!

While this is “well and good,” we must realize that we have a very “bare-bones” Operational Budget with which we are having difficulty in balancing the bottom line. Our income is not sufficient for our expenses. We must increase our income in the Operational Budget. No matter how well we are doing with the Capital Campaign, we cannot move forward to build a Church when we cannot maintain the present ministries and facilities that we have. How can we build and maintain another building/s, when we cannot maintain what we presently have?

The Finance Council has addressed this question repeatedly in meetings over the last several months, and has directed the Development Council to find ways to better educate the Parish in regard to these concerns.

Several responses are now in process:

1. We are beginning the “*Did You Know?*” campaign. Each week in the bulletin there will be listed one item from the Operational Budget to better educate the Parish about the “cost of things,” especially in light of an aging building that is in need of ever-greater maintenance.
2. An envelope will be attached to the bulletin on the second weekend of each month. This will provide parishioners and friends an opportunity to respond more significantly with needed funds for the Operational Budget.
3. I am personally reviewing the financial donation patterns of all parishioners. St. Thomas More Parishioners are generous. We have made great strides in our build-up and build-out of our Parish due to this generosity!

But as we have grown from a small faith community to a much larger one in recent years, we have developed a significant minority of households who, very candidly, are not “pulling their weight.” These households need to be better informed and challenged to live a Christian stewardship way of life that sees the giving of time, talent, and treasure as a faith response and as a serious responsibility of membership in a Faith Community.

These households will be contacted, encouraged, and challenged to take their membership in the St. Thomas More Faith Family seriously, and to respond accordingly.

4. The Pastoral Council will be charged to develop a process that will better inform prospective members of the St. Thomas More Faith Family, so that they are aware of what is expected of them as they join the Parish, and encourage them as they register to make specific commitments of time, talent, and treasure that is in keeping with their realities.

With all of this said, it is important to be mindful that we are doing well as a Parish. Our Finance Council Chair, Don Eppich, quipped at one of our meetings: “You know, if we weren’t building a Church, we would be in great shape!” And that is true. But the reality is that we are building a Church, and a Parish Administration Center, and paying off our original debt, as we continue the work of Jesus for this time and place through our Worship, Education, and Service/Outreach.

I believe that we can do it all, but only if more households begin to take stewardship (the gift of time, talent, and treasure) as a Christian way of life more seriously.

Plans are still being made for the groundbreaking of our Church in 2008, but the intervening months and the Parish response will tell the story.

Know that I am extremely grateful for so many who do so much! And I challenge those “who are on the sidelines” to get on the field!

F. Mike