

**St. Mary Parish Council Meeting  
February 14, 2006**

The **meeting opened** at 7 pm by Ray Moon, Chairperson. **Gathering hymn:** *River of Glory*. **Scripture passage:** *Mark 2:1-12*, read by Ray Moon, followed by recitation of the Parish Mission Statement. **Share/reflect:** Councilors shared their reflections.

January **meeting minutes accepted** with one correction noted.

**Youth ministry report:** Liz LeGant

At the youth meeting it was decided to have a clothing collection. Clothing will be collected by the students in the youth ministry on a date to be determined, with the donations going to St. Vincent DePaul.

**Pastor's report** – Fr. Chuck Schramm

Printed information was distributed: an e-mail newsletter by the Vicar, *The Cincture*. Brian Mason is the Associate Vicar for Clergy and the Vicar for Planning. He shared information about the spring placement process and the shortage of priests. There are 21 openings and only 13 priests available for placement. Eight priests will retire this year, and another 24 priests will reach retirement age of 68 or older in 2006.

There are many variables to take into consideration, but the reality is that there will be far fewer priests available for ministry than are needed. We do need to understand the reality of the situation, plan for the future with parishes within our cluster, and then get going on strategic planning.

The Priest Alliance, an organization of 140 priests of which Fr. Chuck Schramm and Fr. Art Heinze are members, has been meeting to discuss issues that affect priests. They plan to ask the Archdiocese what plan of action they have to address the shortage. Dialogue needs to take place respectfully, to learn what strategies are under consideration. "It is an opportunity and a challenge. Collaboration has to be part of the solution. I think we have a good start in our cluster. We need to pray about it, monitor the situation, and stay informed", commented Fr. Chuck.

Archbishop Dolan received a letter from a group of people asking to have the celebration of Confirmation program moved to the eighth grade. The Archbishop chose to have a consultation meeting attended by priests, religious formation staff, and parents.

A study showed that a majority of diocese throughout the country prefer to offer the Confirmation program to high school age youth. Those present at the consultation session had a strong belief that the minimum should be kept at 16 years of age. The Archbishop will then make his decision after discussion with the Archdiocesan Priests Council on February 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Financial update** – Ron Gilles

Envelopes and weekly Offertory collections are still ahead of last year at this time. But, we are still below the 3% increase in donations that were anticipated for 2006.

The Refinance Committee made a recommendation to the Finance Committee to accept the proposal made by Catholic Knights for a 7.25%, 15 year mortgage. They had the best

terms offered, for that period of time, with no restrictive clauses. St. Mary would have an approximate \$42,000 monthly payment for the next 15 years.

A motion was made to approve the refinancing offer by Catholic Knights Insurance, as described by Ron Gilles. Motion seconded; passed unanimously. Councilors expressed many thanks to the Refinance Committee for their diligence and financial expertise.

We still need \$515,000/year in pledges to pay the yearly mortgage payment. This issue will be addressed at the committee level in the next few months.

The Tech Committee, a team of computer and technical experts, was able to resolve the Internet issues plaguing St. Mary's computers for months without the need for an outside consultant. Between all of their expertise, they were able to make our system functional again for the school and the parish office. We are very appreciative of the time and energy our tech experts give to resolving our computer issues.

### **New Prepare/Enrich Marriage Program – Julie Schultz**

The materials offer a richer experience for the couples going through this new program. Besides discussion, tools are offered to the engaged couple to work through issues throughout their marriage.

The marriage inventories are geared toward specific couples: co-habiting couples, older couples, unmarried couples with children, and couples planning to marry who do not have children.

Engaged couples meet with a trained prepare/enrich facilitator couple from St. Mary. Each partner takes the Couples Inventory separately, which are then analyzed and scored by computer. The couple can then explore relationship strengths & weaknesses, and growth areas. They can learn communication skills; learn skills to resolve conflict; and develop personal, couple, and family goals. Research has shown that the inventories are 85% accurate in predicting marriage satisfaction. Couples plan for an annual review of their marriage, and attend Couples Enrichment programs. The cost to the engaged couple is \$35.00.

There are seven trained facilitator couples in the new prep program. Barb Schwartz is program coordinator. The facilitator couples meet with the engaged couples 2-3 times, and often develop a long-lasting relationship.

### **District cluster meeting – Patty Ceille**

Cluster parishes will meet with the entire district 16 group at St. Gregory the Great on February 27, 2006. Each parish will then send their Council representative (Patty Ceille) to the district Archdiocesan Council (APC) meeting at the Cousins Center for the first annual Implementation Assembly on April 1, 2006.

The first step is to get the Parish Council's input on the *Spring 2006 Implementation Commission Report*. Parish Councilors came to a consensus response which Patty recorded on the reporting form for the six *2006 District Directives* listed.

Patty will take our responses to the cluster meeting.

After discussion, it was determined that our Pastor, Staff, and Parish Council will need to meet and discuss *spiritual visioning*. Some needs are being met, but could we be doing a better job? Fr. Chuck commented that, having previously met with the Pastoral Staff, they feel that it is their responsibility to provide the Parish Council with ideas.

**New member discernment – Patty Ceille**

Patty requested that each Councilor bring the names of 2 – 3 people who they would recommend for discernment as Parish Council members. A Discernment Committee needs to be formed soon to discern potential Councilors for the four positions that will be vacated by out-going Council members. Youth representatives also need to be