

A Shepherd Shares



“God give you Peace!”

That was the favorite greeting of St. Francis of Assisi. It reminded him that it is God who is the source of all our blessings, and, that we are the means through which God bestows those blessings on others. Remember too that after the resurrection, “Peace be with you!” were the first words spoken by Jesus to his disciples. Six months have passed since the change in pastors. It is a good time to count our blessings.

First, we have a newly formed Pastoral Council. This weekend 30 members of the various parish and school leadership groups came together for the first of two Leadership Formation Days. We had the chance to meet each other, hear why these wonderful and gifted people are willing to serve this parish and to share our dreams of the good things yet to be realized.

Second, construction is about to begin on the kindergarten building for our parish school. The completion date is August 6th, so it will be in use at the start of the next school year. The cost of the new building will be about 850 thousand dollars, but no debt will be incurred, due to some generous individual gifts toward the project and wise planning over the past few years.

Third, concerning the completion of the parish hall, we have cleared the first step with the Diocesan Building Commission and will present our plan to the Diocesan Pastoral Finance Council on the 16th of this month. We hope work will begin on the parish hall this fall. The cost for finishing the second floor and improving the first floor will be close to 2 million dollars.

With the enthusiastic support of the parish school and your generosity over the years, we can put 1 million dollars into the project. That means we will have to borrow another million dollars. Though I invite, encourage and welcome any gifts directed toward the parish hall project, we will not be doing this as a capital campaign. Instead, the plan is that once we have begun construction to complete the hall, we will focus attention on developing a master plan for the other important projects we know are on

our horizon. That way, in a few years, we will be in a much better position to conduct a capital campaign for the projects that you and parishioner leaders will help to identify and prioritize.

The fourth and final blessing I want to mention, though there are many others, is that in spite of the present economic uncertainty your continued generosity helps our Social Ministry to help those in need. There has been an increase in the number of those seeking assistance through our parish Social Ministry. Many of them are our parishioners who have lost jobs or suffered serious illnesses and in some cases, both!

This parish is known for its generosity – we are always in the top five of all parishes in the amount we contribute to special collections throughout the year! I am inviting, asking and pleading with you to continue, and, to increase your contribution of Time, Talent and Treasure on the parish level.

All registered families should have received a copy of our new Parish Directory. In the center of the book is your 2009 Parish Stewardship Commitment Card. Last week, Ann Marie Chamblee, a parishioner, spoke at all the Masses about her and her son's experience of Stewardship. In part, she shared that although they have to sometimes say "no" to what they want in favor of what they believe God is asking of them, they have always found God to be ever more generous.

Next weekend, we will ask you to make your Stewardship commitment of Time, Talent and Treasure by turning in the completed Commitment Card from the Directory. Please take to heart this request to prayerfully consider, as individuals and as families, what you believe you can commit yourselves to for the next year. What you tell us you are willing to commit to will be considered in the formation of our budget and our plans. I confess I am intentionally tugging at your "heart strings!" By what you write on the card, tell me that you will work with our parish leaders to complete the parish hall, continue or expand our outreach to others, and to move our parish toward realizing the exciting challenges ahead.

In the Spirit of Jesus and Saint Francis, I say again, "God give you Peace!"

Fr. Tom