

A Note from the Pastor

Dear Friends:

It is with much excitement that I share with you that all the necessary steps and approvals have been received to proceed with the opening of the St. Isidore Center for Youth Catechesis. It has been a long and difficult process and at times we were beginning to lose hope, but this last week we overcame our final hurdles and will send the lease to Bishop Sartain next week for his signature.

I want to be very clear and upfront with you about the financial decisions that needed to be made to make the Center a reality:

- ❖ to initiate the lease we needed to pay a security deposit and first month's rent - \$15,000.00. Our next lease payment will not be due until January 1, 2010
- ❖ we have determined that our budget can support \$90,000.00 worth of renovations to the building
- ❖ \$50,000.00 worth of renovations will be reimbursed to us by the owner upon occupancy of the building
- ❖ \$15,000.00 will be a charitable donation by the owner
- ❖ \$25,000.00 has been built into the operating budget of the Center. The remainder of the renovations will be completed by volunteer professionals and other parishioners and by using donated materials
- ❖ As of July 22, 2009 we have over \$165,000 in pledges and about \$12,000 collected toward that goal. Now that we have approval we will begin to collect on those pledges.
- ❖ Fundraising efforts will continue within and outside of the parish through the duration of the lease

One of the conditions from the Bishop to approve the lease for the Catechetical Center was to fulfill the requirement of the Diocese that no parish can enter into additional financial commitment without first retiring existing debt. As you know we have been making regular payments on our construction loan which has a balance of \$275,000.00. This year we had earmarked the \$100,000.00 net in the 09-10 fiscal year budget to be used towards the payment of that loan which we intended to retire in early 2012. In the past we received 5% interest on our savings and incurred 5% interest on our debt. As of July 1 we now receive 3% on our savings and continue to incur 5% interest on our loan, so we are losing 2% interest by continuing to carry that loan.

After much negotiation with the Diocese, we came up with a compromise. With consensus from the Finance Committee and the Parish Council, I have made the decision to use money from our savings account to pay approximately one half of that construction loan (\$136,000.00) now, \$39,000.00 in September and \$50,000.00 in March and September of 2010 to retire our debt more than a year early. This decision still leaves us with a minimum of \$258,000.00 in savings at the end of September. The intent will be to put any surplus funds into the savings account during the year - as our cash flow allows - to begin building up our savings account again.

I will be honest with you, the Finance Committee was very nervous about taking the risk of

reducing our savings account in these difficult financial times. They also recognized that the decision is more than just about our savings account – it a spiritual decision about the best faith formation for our young people. Recognizing the importance of our young people in the Church, they deferred that those types of decisions belong to me – as pastor – to make. I am grateful to them for their trust, respect and support of my role as pastor.

The Parish Council was not on board with the original response of the Diocese, but now feels we did well in negotiating our current payment plan and have expressed overwhelming support for the project. I am grateful to them, since they are the ones who originally encouraged and supported us in the search for space for our junior and senior high religious education and youth ministry programs – thereby getting us closer to our #1 parish goal of increasing teen participation and involvement in the parish.

I want to be clear, that I did not take this decision lightly and have lost some nights of sleep over this decision. I can't help but believe though that this is not my plan or David's plan, or the Parish Council's plan or Tom's plan – IT IS GOD'S PLAN! The 30 plus pieces needed to make this dream a reality would never have come together if it was not God's will! 87 families would not have committed \$165,000+ if it was not God's plan! Countless offers from professional contractors from our parish would not have made commitments of their time and talent to renovate our space if it was not God's plan! True Stewardship is about trust – trust that if you are doing God's will, he will provide for your needs. I have seen that countless times and have no reason to believe that He will ever fail us!

I hope you feel that you have been kept up to date on the progress of development of this plan and were given enough opportunities to share in this decision. I have done my best to be honest about the process, to include parish leadership in the process and final decision, and to be a good steward of the gifts you have entrusted to the parish. Please continue to pray for our teens and for the continued success of the St. Isidore Center for Youth Catechesis aka "Youth Center" aka "The Link." If you are one of the people who were waiting on the final decision to make your commitment to the Youth Center – now is the time. We have the approval! Please make your financial pledge or commitment of talent to the Youth Center today!

On a final note, I called our Youth Ministry Director, David Heimann, Tuesday afternoon to let him know that the Youth Center was a reality and he announced it to the teens who are on Mission Trip with him in St. Louis – and I wish you could have heard their excitement, screams, applause and gratitude! That gratitude wasn't to Tom, David or me – it was to God and to all of you who have supported this project in many different ways. So in the name of the teens I say "thank you" and "WOO HOO!"

God bless you!
Fr. Jerry