

Two years ago I announced that St. Regis Parish would end that fiscal year in the red, unable to pay our bills. The margin was fairly small--if we had 54 weeks of collections and 52 weeks of bills we'd have come out even. We cut some expenses and reduced our staff. You responded generously. I especially thank our school families, whose giving during this time set a wonderful example to adults and to children. Others have increased their pledge, and some give less but give faithfully. Every gift has made a difference. Today our cash flow is healthier, and for the second year since then we will end in the black, with an increase in savings. During the same period, we have built the St. Regis Endowment Trust Fund for Catholic Education from \$2000 to \$10000, (thanks to Dave Vorbeck and the endowment board) and we have received enough contributions to the Many Gifts One Church building campaign to secure a loan from Bishop Boland for the construction of a new church (thanks to Tom Sack and the building committee). We break ground next Sunday. I love giving reports like this. I'm grateful to Pete Julich and Jim Park who chaired the parish and stewardship councils during that time.

Throughout those days, Theresa Van Pelt kept welcoming new members to our church through the catechumenate, Kathy Smith kept PTO meetings lively, Bill Heydon continued our model athletic association, Mary Ann Polston and the crafters lent their skills to the parish, and two women from our parish council, Maria Meyers and Katie Radford took on a huge assignment: They got all eight councils in the parish to produce our newly published five year plan. Just when we'd like to pause and catch our breath, Katie and Maria have prodded us into the future.

To write the plan, our parish council asked what people want our parish to be like in the year 2000. Here's what we heard: A welcoming community that embraces those from different walks of life and invites involvement by everyone, a strong school, financial stability, limited debt, solid contributions, a healthy endowment fund, a new church, renovated school spaces, more adult meeting space, emotionally inspiring worship, ethnically diverse music, a strong community spirit, a feeling of ownership by everyone in the parish, youth who continue the Catholic faith, and social service and public relations which promote our ministries and build community with the neighborhood. You can read all this in the bulletin this weekend; we're giving each of you the introduction to the five year plan so you can see it at a glance. If you want the whole plan, just call us and we'll get it to you.

We have big goals for the next five years: We want to finance and build a new church building, reconfigure the school and meeting rooms, and secure a better financial base. We want to begin paying back our loan, we'd like \$1 million to finance the renovation of this building, and another million dollars in the endowment trust fund.

Next weekend we make our pledge. We ask every member to contribute. Your gift helps our goal. But it does even more for you. Your gift makes you a charitable person. It forms good habits. It opens your heart wider for the people you love. It awakens you to the charity God gives you: a home, a family, friends, a great country, fun neighbors, and a parish that will baptize your child, witness your marriage, bury the dead, educate the kids, and reach with your hand to the poor. Support St. Regis and experience the love of God.