

Thanks to all who've participated in discussions about our building proposal. I've heard excitement, fear, challenges, and some deep questions. Today I'd like to respond to some of those questions and help you dream a little about the future.

The top question you know: How can we even think about expanding when we have trouble now meeting our operating expenses? The simple answer is we can only do it if we seek additional means of raising funds. In recent weeks the stewardship council has been working on this, and I'd like to tell you what we're learning:

First, last year, the money we put into the collection was less than what we pledged by about \$90,000. 200 households fell behind on their pledge. Now that also means that 80% of us came through with 90% of the total parish pledge, and I thank you. We're calling those households to ask if they can still help, and if not to help us understand why. That should lessen last year's deficit and prepare us better for next year.

Second, many households do not pledge. Our next step is to call them. If we can expand the number of contributors we can strengthen our financial base.

Third, we're identifying other ways to give. For example, this year we opened a school endowment fund. It takes years to build an endowment, but as that fund grows it will relieve pressure on the parish budget. Another example: How many of you know what a charitable remainder annuity trust is? If I told you it's a method for you to contribute to the church, and in which you get not only a tax credit but annual income as well, would that interest you? Let me ask you a personal question. If you're comfortable with this put up your hand. How many of you have a will? That's wonderful. Congratulations! So many people don't. How many of you have included St. Regis Church in your will? If you love this parish and wish you had a way to give more--you have a way. And it won't cost another nickle from your paycheck. In the past, we've done very well financing this parish from regular contributions alone, but there are other ways to give. I challenge the stewardship council to help not just the parish but all our members to manage our money in better ways.

And fourth, we are prepared to seek corporate donations and grants. We'd like to give businesses in our area an opportunity to invest in the neighborhood.

This brings me to another issue. Some of you are worried about our neighborhood because you've seen others grow unsafe. The Mid-America Research Council assures us we can expect some growth in the years ahead. The quality of life, I think, is up to us. We are the neighborhood, and we can claim it for Christ. That's what church is all about.

Does the diocese support this plan? Yes. Bishop Sullivan himself supports our goal. \$1.7 million sounds like a lot of money. But we only need half to begin, and we could raise half in three years if the average gift per household is \$6 a week. That's all. Some can give more. Some have told me they'll advance their gift. One older member promised one dollar for every seat in the new church. Professionals tell us a parish this size can reach the goal. We think we can do it. What if we're wrong? The diocesan finance council will stop us. They

won't let us sink into a debt we cannot handle.

You'll receive a card at the end of Mass. We're not asking for a pledge today. We're asking if you support this project. You can fill out the card today, or you can take it home and think it over. We're here this St. Regis Day because twenty-nine years ago Fr. Jackson led a group of parishioners from a paint shop in Loma Vista. They sacrificed and laid a foundation. Many of them are still members. They gave us a legacy. Now our generation has an opportunity to leave a legacy for the future of St. Regis. I'm convinced we can do it if we're in it together. The parish council awaits your reply.

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