

Dear Fellow Parishioner,

04/19/2012

It comes with much sadness that we inform you that the Finance and Pastoral Councils have made the recommendation to Fr. Faustino that St. Mary's School be closed at the end of the 2011-2012 school year.

As you all know, this recommendation was reached after two years of struggling to correct the incredible challenges that our parish and school have had to face. In the end, it was the majority decision that the obstacles were just too large to overcome. The obstacles, which include a worsening debt and declining enrollment may be secondary to the general feeling of 'uncertainty'. "Will we have a school for just one year? Will we have the same teachers? Will there be different leadership? Will we buy the O.E. Gray School? Will our weekly envelope giving equal our expenses? Will parishioners who have left the parish return? Will people continue to donate to the school operating fund until the end of the school year so we can pay our teachers?"

The reality of continuously trying to find solutions to problems that seemed to change from one day to the next has understandably led to this underlying feeling of uncertainty with school parents, parishioners, and parish leadership all being affected.

This recommendation was made at a meeting Tuesday afternoon, April 17, 2012. The parishioners at the meeting included the members of the Finance Council, the Pastoral Council (which includes the Parish Trustees), the school administration and Fr. Faustino. There was discussion about the possibility of keeping the school open with fewer grades. But, the lack of enrollment in the lower level grades made this option difficult. Some held the opinion that it would still be easier to remain open with far fewer grades than closing and then attempting to re-open the school in the future. In the end, the majority felt that the closing of the school would be more financially responsible at this time for our parishioners. Needless to say, it was an emotional meeting and we realize that this will have far reaching consequences for our children and our parish.

Where do we go from here? -----The future depends on all of us.

The Council members, as the duly appointed representatives of the parish, reached consensus to recommend to Fr. Faustino that the Capital Campaign donations must be returned to the donors. The timing for this has not been determined, and the process will be described in full detail at a later date. Because the contributions will no longer be utilized for the specific, stated goal of the Capital Campaign---to establish a permanent location for the St. Mary's Parish K-8 (Nine Grades) Elementary School in the O.E. Gray Building---there is both a legal and moral responsibility to return the remaining portion of the funds which have not been used already for the campaign goals.

The Capital Campaign donor will have several options. The donor may accept the returned contribution. The donor may choose to not accept the return so that part or all of their contribution could be used for debt reduction, parish expenses, teacher salaries that are contracted through the summer, or the possible refurbishing of part of the old school. While it may seem ludicrous to think about spending money on the old school when we have just told you about our large debt, it would also be irresponsible to not consider the need for space to hold CCD classes or a possible future reopening of our Catholic school with fewer grades. There was a lot of discussion about that possibility at our meeting. For this to happen, we would have to erase the debt, have a stable weekly offering and work within an absolutely firm budget.

In conclusion, we must point out that this letter is to inform you of our recommendations concerning the future of our school, and that Father Faustino has officially made his recommendation for closure of the school to Bishop Morlino. By Canon Law, the Bishop can accept or reject Father's Recommendation. Bishop Morlino informed Fr. Faustino "I will make my decision at the middle of the week."

Thank you for all of your prayers. If you have questions, you may contact any council member.

Rev. Faustino Ruiz

Terry Woolf \*Parish Trustee

Jerry McCabe \*Parish Trustee

Myron Tranel \*Finance Council President

Jim Rosemeyer \*Pastoral Council President