

Our New Regional School! *Initial Meeting Held*

On November 3, all parents and parishioners in each of the four parishes in the C.A.R.E. effort (Assumption, St. Margaret Mary, St. Ann & Little Flower) received a letter from the Steering Committee indicating that they will formally recommend to the Archdiocesan Education Commission and to the Archbishop that the three remaining schools be closed in June, 2008, and in their place an entirely new entity with a new name be established for the school year, 2008-2009. They added that there would be one campus for our new school at the former St. Ann school site. As a follow-up to that announcement, a meeting was held on November 12, 2007 at St. Ann to enable those interested to tour the St. Ann facility and for the Steering Committee to present some additional information, as well as answer any questions that they could at this point.

All four pastors, principals and business managers were at this meeting. Each of the four pastors spoke at the meeting. Fr. Tom Dennemann (St. Ann) welcomed all as we gathered together to create the best school we can possibly have, that is affordable and here for our children for many years to come. Fr. Bob Goebel (Little Flower) quickly reviewed the process that had taken place over the past several years. Concern was first expressed over declining enrollment in 2002, and after discussion and a demographic study, the four pastors began meeting in the fall of 2005. They had four objectives—to insure a quality education grounded in Catholic values, that was financially affordable, using the best educators in a way that enabled parishioners to remain at that parish. Fr. Jerry Gardner (St. Margaret Mary) spoke about next steps. He indicated that the Steering Committee had only come to a final decision on one site in October. The next step will be to submit the full, final report to the archdiocese at the end of November. He said that they expect approval before Christmas. With approval, there will be early registration in January.

Tim Clifford (St. Ann's business manager) then spoke on what was a key element in deciding to go with one site as opposed to two—finances. They (the business managers) were asked to do some initial estimates on different scenarios. Based on the assumptions, the savings from going to one campus instead of two was over \$670,000 ... a savings that will enable us to discuss expanding what offerings at our new school, as well as be reflected in each parish's subsidy. A table summarizing the key financials and assumptions presented at the meeting can be found on p.7. One key assumption that was welcomed by all was that the tuition in our new regional school would be held constant at this year's rate—\$2,250—for the next two years!

At that point, Tim opened the floor for questions on the finances. It was pointed out that the savings did not take into account startup costs, especially new books. This would obviously be a large expense, but still offer savings. While there were a couple additional questions relating to the finances, many parents and parishioners rose at this point to ask questions related to busing, class size, latch key programs and more. Several were quite upset by the change. More were upset that they were being asked to make this move on very little information. Marianne Rosemond (principal, St. Ann) assured everyone that they'd have a lot more information to go on before registration. Fr. Tom offered one fact that seemed to sum up the move. To paraphrase ... "if we don't take this step now, I can assure you that at least two, if not all three schools will have to close in the next 4-5 years". A sobering thought for many.

Fr. Bill wrapped up by reinforcing the opportunity our new regional school presents to enhance the curriculum with more possibilities for our children. About 20 more parents, parishioners and teachers then stepped up to the microphone during the official question & answer period to raise additional questions and express concerns. All present were encouraged to sign up to help out in several areas as we move forward on our new regional school. Over 100 signed up that evening.

- Bill Rocklin