

Homily: 4-5 June 2011
Feast of the Ascension-A
Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Acts of the Apostles 1: 1-11
Ephesians 1: 17-23
Matthew 28: 16-20

A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR OUR PARISH

The topic that I am going to address today is so important to the life of our parish that I am going to use homily-time to talk with you about it.

You will be receiving this information in the mail within the week, but I wanted to have the opportunity to talk with you personally about it first.

I hope that you have heard by now that there is a Diocesan Campaign taking place in stages among all of the parishes of our Cleveland Catholic Diocese under the leadership of the Catholic Community Foundation.

The Diocesan Campaign is entitled "Rooted in Faith – Forward in Hope."

A diocesan goal of \$125 million has been set to carry out the work of the Church in the Diocese of Cleveland in five critical areas:

- 1) revitalizing and renewing parish life as the center of our faith;
- 2) strengthening our faith through evangelization and lay faith formation;
- 3) ensuring access to high quality Catholic education;
- 4) investing in clergy formation and care for our retired priests; and
- 5) ministering to the needy of our region through health and human services.

Our Saint Joseph Parish goal for this Diocesan Campaign is \$1,520,000. **How was this parish goal amount calculated?** The parish's average of the last three years of annual offertory income is multiplied by 137% to arrive at the parish goal for the Diocesan Campaign.

Of the monies raised here, 70% would go to the Diocese and 30% would stay here in our parish. For monies raised over the goal, 30% would go to the Diocese and 70% would stay here.

I was asked by Diocesan Campaign leadership if we might wish to consider having a “combined campaign” rather than a single campaign. A combined campaign would allow us to raise additional monies for some parish projects.

If we did a combined campaign, our diocesan goal of \$1,520,000 would remain the same, along with its distribution of 70% to the Diocese and 30% to our parish. After this goal has been reached, 100% of the over-goal monies would remain in our parish for our own building projects.

Some parish projects that I have been hearing about over the last number of years include: a gym-family center, more parking, additional office and meeting space, and, of course, eliminating our parish debt. These were areas that we examined and presented as part of our last parish capital campaign in 2004.

Our current practice gym is not suitable for regulation games, it has no area for spectators, and it is highly utilized. All of our CYO games are played in off-campus gyms. Our annual Bob Roesky CYO Tournament games are played in gymnasiums of the Avon Lake City Schools. And, I am told, the demand for gym time in our community is already exceeding the availability.

Our church, which holds about 1300 people, is the largest facility on our parish campus. The next largest facilities are Saint Joseph Hall (which was our original church) and our current gym. Each can accommodate about 250 people for parish events. Any larger event, if it is to take place, must be held in rented space elsewhere. A gym-family center would enable so many more gatherings to take place here in our parish – athletic and social.

Parking is already critical on weekends during Mass times, and the addition of a gym-family center would certainly demand more parking spaces. An available place for additional parking would be on the Lake Road side of the church and gathering area – where the two-story brick parish house now stands.

This, (the former rectory), now houses our parish offices. The building has structural problems, is not ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant, and is maxed-out in terms of any more office space.

Taking this building down and using the land for additional parking – while respecting the 100-foot setback line required by city ordinance – would make access to the gathering area and church and Saint Joseph Hall and Saint Joseph Parish School more available.

If the parish house is razed, we would need a place for offices and meeting space. The “V”-shaped brick enclosure at the south end – the Electric Boulevard side – of Saint Joseph Hall could be roofed, and part of the east-west single-story corridor of the school building could be re-designed to provide two adjacent office centers – with a common entrance – for use by the parish pastoral staff and by the parish school staff.

This would also provide for the secure entry of all persons into the school, office complex and parish meeting space, as well as controlled access throughout this facility.

Our parish debt stands at \$511,787.80 (as of 5-12-11) and continues to come down, thanks to the generosity of our parishioners. This debt would need to be eliminated before any new building projects could begin.

All together, how much money would we need to raise in order to: reach our total parish goal for the Diocesan Campaign, eliminate our current debt and build a new gym-family center, add more parking, and provide more office and meeting space?

Using current estimates, if the gym-family center were to be with a single gym, the total project range would be from \$3.8 to \$4.2 million. If the gym-family center were to be with a double gym, the total project range would be from \$5.6 to \$6.2 million.

Why is there such a range in project costs?

As someone put it so well in automobile language, “It all depends upon whether the ‘car’ you have in mind is a Chevrolet, a Buick or a Cadillac.”

Assuming we do a combined campaign, when could construction begin?

50% of the pledged funds must be collected before we would be permitted to begin construction.

The Diocesan Campaign, “Rooted in Faith – Forward in Hope,” is on a 5-year collection schedule and, until it is completed, no new capital campaigns may be initiated in our Diocese.

This means that if we do not enter into a combined campaign along with our Diocesan Campaign, it will be five years from now before we can look again into the possibilities of a gym-family center, additional parking, offices and meeting space or any other building project.

With the endorsement of our Parish Pastoral Council, our Parish Finance Council, and our School Advisory Committee, we are now beginning a “feasibility study” to see what the people of our parish family think about a combined capital campaign: **“Do you favor the ideas and, if so, would you be willing and able to commit to financial support for them?”**

At the end of this month of June, all of the members of our parish family will have an opportunity to complete a questionnaire seeking your input.

A cross-section of our parish is being invited to participate in personal interviews. We hope to have 70-75 one-on-one interviews accomplished during the weeks of June 12th and June 19th.

If you received a letter from me this weekend or receive one on Monday or Tuesday of this week, you are invited to participate in a personal interview. This letter contains information about scheduling an appointment on-line or by calling the parish office. We ask that you do this early this week – ASAP.

When all of the information from this feasibility study has been gathered, I will be sharing the results with you.

Please know that at this point no decisions have been made. Those decisions will not come until the feasibility process is completed in July and we know what the parish thinks and is able to do.

However, regardless of our personal parish goals, our participation in the Diocesan Campaign is required and assured.

In the meantime, please pray for our parish and for our Diocese. Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten each of us to see where we are being led.

And I thank you for all that you are and all that you do to make our Saint Joseph Parish the great family that it is.