

PAX

CHRISTI

Catholic Community



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MY FRIENDS: WE ARE AT A CROSSROAD

—Fr. Patrick Kennedy



In the next few weeks, we will be focusing on Stewardship. It is a yearly ritual that has become part of the fabric of who we are as individuals and as members of a faith community dedicated to making the Gospel of Jesus Christ vibrant and alive in our midst. Over the last many years, we have worked consistently in developing a model of Stewardship that focuses on three vital needs each parish, including the Pax Christi Community, has: these are the contributions of time, talent, and treasure.

Without these sustained gifts given by you, the mission of Pax Christi cannot be implemented. So, once again we come to you, not with hat in hand but with a grateful spirit, and ask you to consider making a commitment to help us fulfill our mission and develop our vision as a faith community here and in our wider community.

While we have been blessed over the last many months with an increase in the giving of your time and talent, we have struggled (along with many of you) in sustaining our financial strength. Our treasure comes directly from your generosity and willingness to give a portion of your dollars to Pax Christi. We are very conscious of how this economic downturn has hit all of us in a significant way. Regardless of what we are hearing about an economy once again on the rise, the effects of the downturn are still operative and affecting us greatly. And while I understand this, I also need to tell you that Pax Christi has come to a crossroad.

Our operating budget for the next fiscal year which begins July 1, 2010, will be 3

million dollars. This is what it costs us simply to do what we are doing now. While this is a lot of money, I believe you know that as many of you have been good stewards with your gifts of time, talent, and treasure, we too have tried to hold the line and be conscious of the limited resources all the while trying to meet the needs of our membership and others who come through our doors. In other words, the dollars you commit to us are used to meet our ministry needs, compensate staff, and help us maintain our existing facilities.

The Finance Council recommended and the Community Council agreed we would operate with a balanced budget. And while they know full well the constraints we are under, in other words relying on your generosity and good will in these difficult times, we still need to be fiscally responsible in devising a budget for the coming fiscal year that we can manage appropriately and that stays within our means in the future. Further, the leadership has indicated to me that we need to pay attention to our long-term needs, especially in regard to our aging facility.

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FR. KENNEDY

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While we are not doing a Capital Campaign, very shortly I and others will be reaching out to you to help restore our reserves by considering making financial gifts that will ensure our sustainability for the future.

For 2009 we received \$1,542,000 in pledges, though our contributions for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009 totaled \$2,605,000. Clearly people give more than they are willing to pledge, and I understand that. But in this economy, we need a better sense of what money we can count on in order to make decisions and plan effectively to operate the parish. We need those of you who have never made a commitment to do so, and we need all parishioners to prayerfully consider increasing their stewardship pledge.

Therefore, as we come to ask for your participation, I need to be clear about the consequences should we be unsuccessful in securing commitments for our 3 million dollar budget in the next three months. If we don't have a clear indication from you through your pledge to support our programming needs, just compensation for our employees, and maintenance of our facilities for the coming fiscal year of 2010-2011, then by mid-January we will need to enter a discernment process for how we will maintain a balanced budget and attempt to do what we are doing now without painful alterations.

On a personal note, I sense things are changing in parish life, and I am increasingly disturbed by what I hear and see after 32 years of ministry. Parishes are struggling; some are worse off than we are. They are laying off staff and cutting back on ministries and programming because the gifts of time, talent, and financial resources from parishioners have dwindled. As we go through the reorganization process for the Archdiocese, I listen to other pastors express great concern about how we will ultimately be asked to do more with limited resources. I sense the tension in our leadership gatherings to try and be fiscally responsible in a tough economic climate, and yet I see firsthand how this has affected our parish community and the work we attempt to do each day.

I also need to say I have learned over the many years of being a pastor, much of it coming from my mentors early on and the people I have had the privilege to partner with in ministry, what it takes to lead a great parish. While some of the parishes have made these decisions to curtail ministry and staff, I am not willing to succumb, at least not yet, to the inducement to follow suit. And while it may be foolhardy on my part to resist going with the times, I am not willing to give in just yet. However, that having been said, I know we cannot continue to keep providing first class ministry without each of you coming forward at this time, to willingly make a financial commitment that lets us know as soon as possible if you are able to share with us some of what you have.

I work with the finest people in church ministry today. There isn't an employee who is unnecessary. All are vital to help fulfill the mission we have set before us. I am proud of the work these people do, and I know many of you are too. The leadership of the parish continues to grapple with providing ways for us to meet the challenges of our mission and vision. They are dedicated and committed to thinking big, always tempered by a sense of realism and practicality that guides what they do. They devote an enormous amount of their time and talent, and I watch in awe and experience great gratitude as they help lead and guide this parish.

We have worked hard, myself and others, at trying to communicate on a regular basis what is going on, opportunities we have available, and ways for all of us to deepen our life rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and through the ministry of the church. We strive to create a daily rhythm of prayer each week, faith formation for each member, and daily pastoral care for those most in need in our midst. It is my humble opinion that together we succeed more than we fail in our efforts. I believe these ministries and the people who provide them are what make Pax Christi one great Catholic Community in this Archdiocese. I intend, with your help, to keep it that way.

I may be wrong, and you might prove me so, but I am convinced many of you believe this too. I need you to show your support of our efforts by making your time, talent, and financial commitment and to do so before mid-January. Three million dollars is a lot to commit to in a short period of time. I sincerely hope we can do it. I believe we can reach our goal if each of us does contribute something.

Finally, I believe the crossroad we are at will not only prove to be challenging but it is also an opportunity for each of us to help one another in meeting the needs of all who come to Pax Christi. While these needs are wide and varied, there are very few people who are helped and ministered to who are not overwhelmed by the sustained generosity they receive from the various members of this parish in their need. I believe we can continue to provide these services with all of us responding in a spirit of gratitude for what God has given to us and the grace we have to share it with others.