

# 2008 State of the Parish Address

(Given on Feb. 16/17 By Peter Pittner)

I consider it a privilege to come before you for the second year in a row as your Parish Council Chairperson to report on the state of our parish. It is my pleasure to report to you that the state of our Parish is sound. Financially, we finished our 2007 fiscal year in the black, we have operated under a balanced budget for the last five years, we anticipate a balanced budget for fiscal year 2008 and we continue to be debt free.

In the area of ministry we are serving the needs of the majority of our parishioners and we continue to reach out to the community. Each of our standing committees, including Activities & Communications, Buildings & Grounds, Finance, Human Concerns, Life-long Faith Formation, Personal, Spiritual Life & Worship and Stewardship are staffed with active volunteers. As is always the case, our volunteer base is dominated by an active group of parishioners who we continue to depend on year after year. We look forward to thanking all of you this weekend at our Volunteer Breakfast even as we continue to pray for more of you to join us. If we are to continue our tradition as a successful parish in meeting the needs of our members and of the community at large, we need more of you to join our ranks. You will be amazed at the benefits that you derive as you work for the benefit of others.

Our paid staff continues to serve us well with full time positions that includes our Parish Director, Pastoral Associate, Director of Religious Education, Maintenance Director and Office Manager. We are also grateful for the addition of Frederick as our new Music and Liturgy Director. Additional paid part time positions include a Religious Education Secretary, maintenance help, Assistant Liturgy Director and Book Keeper. They have all done a great job in controlling expenses while continuing to meet our needs and we thank them for their on going dedication.

Of course, in addition to all of these good things, our parish, like all others, faces an array of challenges. Many, if not all of these challenges are not unique to us, and many are out of our direct control. These include a shortage of Priests, Parish Directors and other Religious, an aging population, decreased attendance at Liturgy, a decrease in volunteerism, decreased financial support, a decrease in youth involvement in the church and the continuing saga of the clergy sex scandals.

As a Parish, we have recognized these challenges and as a result, we came together in 2006 to publish a strategic plan to chart our course through these challenging times.

This plan sets our collective goals and objectives through the year 2010. For those of you who are not familiar with the plan, I encourage you to review it on our Parish website, or to borrow a copy from our Parish office.

In general, the Pastoral Plan sets measurable goals for each of our Parish's standing committees. Some of these goals are fairly simple and are meant to maintain or enhance some of the many things that we currently do well. Other goals are more ambitious and will require greater effort and commitment from all of us. These include greater collaboration with the other south side and city Parishes and planning for the needs of our physical facilities.

Coincidentally, the Archdiocese has also recognized the need for a plan, particularly in the areas of Youth Education & Faith Formation and Adult and Family Faith Formation. The Archdiocesan plan, titled Faith in our Future, has already been introduced to you by Deacon Mike and you will be hearing much more about it in the coming weeks. The good thing about the Archdiocese initiative and the St. Peter Claver Plan is that they work well together, particularly in relation to our building project and in our continued collaboration with our fellow south side parishes. In addition to raising funds for our building project, our parish Case Statement, which will define our specific parish goals for the Archdiocesan campaign, will include collaboration with the other south side parishes in the areas of youth ministry and continued support of Christ Child Academy. These initiatives have already resulted in the formation of a South Side Leadership Council that will continue to meet to explore additional ways for our parish communities to work in a collaborative fashion.

As if all of this wasn't enough, as was announced several weeks ago, we have received approval from the Archdiocese to raze our school building. Funds for this project are available and this work will be scheduled in the very near future. Before the building comes down, we will offer the opportunity to gather formally as a community to memorialize this building that has been the part of so many of our lives. Please watch for announcements in the coming weeks. Although change such as this can be painful, it is the first step in a very exciting time as we work together to build the future of our parish.

As you can see, there is a lot happening at St. Peter Claver. We continue to do many things well, but we also face many challenges as we move forward. However, most of our major challenges have been self defined and are the result of our coming together through the strategic planning process. Through continued cooperation, sacrifice and hard work we can continue to proactively take action in defining our future rather than waiting to react to the changes around us.

We had the wisdom to come together as a parish to define a course for our future. Let us pray for that same wisdom as we continue to implement our plans and that with God's guidance, we have the courage to follow through.

Thank you!