

## The Pastor's Page

Dear Friends,

I am writing today with some very exciting and hopeful news as we enter the New Year!

As you know, the parish purchased four houses on the south side of Lake Street several years ago, with the intention of someday removing them to make room for the expansion of the school. In early 2009, after several years of study and planning, we unveiled the design of the expanded school campus, a design that reflected extensive input from our neighbors throughout 2008. We began a feasibility study to determine parish interest in financing the project; however, because of the sizeable impact of the stock market decline in 2008 and the subsequent economic recession, we had no choice but to put our building plans on hold for the time being.

While the economic environment these past several years has created limitations for us, our space needs have remained unchanged – we are still sorely in need of the expansion work we started many years ago.

Today, as financial prospects have improved, I am delighted to announce that we are now making plans to move forward with our school campus expansion in a phased approach, with a new and relatively modest first phase planned for 2012. I also wish to cordially invite all of you to a joint parish and neighborhood Open House to see and hear specifics about the proposed expansion, which reflects excellent and ongoing input from both parish and neighborhood representatives.

To provide context, this fall, our building committee, parish council and finance committee began discussing the feasibility of re-starting the campus expansion project. The first phase of the project would consist of removing the houses we own on the south side of Lake Street between Alabama and Zarthan and creating safe, grass-based play space for our school children. The second phase, which would include the facilities expansion, does not have a specific timeline at this time; however, the growing space needs that led to our original plan still exist and our school facilities remain a high priority. We plan to explore opportunities to complete the project in the coming years as the economy recovers. In the meantime, our children are sorely in need of space for physical education and exertion on our premises -- meeting this need constitutes the first phase of the project.

Our renters, who live in the four properties which will be impacted by this project, are very important to us. Please be assured that we will be fair and just in supporting their transition to new housing. In the last few days, I met with each of these families, and have conveyed this assurance to them personally.

We have also met recently with the leadership of the Sorensen Neighborhood Association, and are continuing to seek their input and advice as we move forward. It is important to us to continue to seek open and respectful communications with our neighbors in the process. We especially look forward to input regarding the project from our neighbors who live in the immediate area adjacent to the school.

While we also own two properties along Alabama on the north side of Lake Street which run adjacent to the church, we have no plans to seek to purchase any other properties, and we have no intention of using our properties for any kind of expansion of the church on the north side. All of our space needs, for both the school and the church, will be met through the completion of all phases of the building project at the school, on the south side of Lake Street. We envision our new space, in all its phases, will be an asset to both Holy Family and the Sorensen neighborhood.

I am looking forward to seeing you at one of the Open House events in February to learn more about this exciting and positive development for Holy Family! With God's grace and the fortitude and commitment of our parish, I am optimistic that we will see through what we started many years ago, for the benefit of our children and the wider parish community.

Happy New Year!

Reverend Thomas W. Dufner