

Parishioner Perspective

September 12, 2010

Please read the following perspective provided by a fellow parishioner on what "My Parish, My Commitment, Our Future" means to them. Thank you to the Bonin Family for sharing.

I grew up in White Bear Lake. Along with my family I attended St. Mary of the Lake Church and received the sacraments of Baptism, First Communion, Reconciliation, and Confirmation. My wife Rachel and I have been part of St. Mary of the Lake Parish for 13 years. We are raising three boys in the Catholic Faith, the two oldest attend the parish school. We have been blessed to have shared all three Baptisms and one First Communion along with our parish community.

St. Mary of the Lake is a parish where one can Form, Affirm, and Fulfill one's Faith. By attending weekly mass, participating in other services and sacraments as well as many social functions, we gather the relationships and information that are needed to further form and grow in the Catholic faith. We affirm our faith as we celebrate with other believers attending mass. Witnessing others, such as older parishioners' reverence and dedication to Christ as well as the perseverance of young families with hectic schedules and young children, helps to renew our commitment. Gratefully, we are reminded of the sacrifice and effort needed to live in the Catholic Faith.

We have found that St. Mary's offers many opportunities to minister to fulfill our faith commitment. One of our family favorites has been the Christmas Baby Jesus Layette project. It has been a great way for all of us to be involved as we are called to give back by ministering to the less fortunate.

St. Mary of the Lake is where we see the future of our family's faith. It is our spiritual home. The Bonin family will live out the Catholic Faith through a Catholic Parish and we want to live it here in White Bear Lake. Giving to St. Mary's has always been a priority as we recognize our financial obligation to take ownership in our faith community. The Brian Bonin Family

The following are a few of the many questions discussed at our recent information sharing sessions on Sept 4-5. We will include more questions and answers in upcoming bulletin inserts.

F I have been attending St. Mary's but I am not a member, do I need to be? How do I join?

Yes, we would encourage you to sign up. Being a registered parishioner allows you full sacramental participation and ensures you will receive all parish and Archdiocesan mailings, allow you to receive information on our ministries, sacraments and services along with the opportunity for stewardship offerings. All you need to do to join is call the parish office at 651-429-7771.

A How many members do we have?

Q We are still working to complete the parish census in order to firm up this number – traditionally we have had somewhat less than 2500 households. People move out of our area, kids grow up and move out while others move into our community. Our parish roster is updated as changes are communicated to us, but periodically we need to go through the entire list to make sure it is up to date. If you are a non-member looking to join or an existing parishioner who has not updated the office with any census changes, please do so soon so we can wrap up the census by emailing contactus@stmarys-wbl.org or calling the parish office at 651-429-7771.

What is our church mission? Do we have a church vision?

Our mission is to be a Catholic community centered in the Eucharist and committed to lifelong worship, faith formation and education, social ministry and justice and stewardship. The theme of Vision 2012 is Inspiring our Faith. Vision 2012 is our five year plan that was created by our parishioners and sets forth a vision for our future at St. Mary of the Lake by focusing on inspiring our worship, growing our faith, living our faith and supporting our foundation.

What is this bulletin insert?

This insert is the first of five bulletin inserts being shared with you over the next two months in order to inform you about the Faith and Friendship, Opportunities, Ministries and "The State of the Parish". We will share some of our parishioners perspectives of St. Mary's, continue to provide information through this question and answer format, update you on important dates and events and provide recaps of the ongoing awareness events following mass on the weekends of September 18-19 and October 2-3 and 23-24. For access to this and other information don't forget to visit St. Mary's website at www.stmarys-wbl.org.

The purpose of the following area is to provide more comprehensive details about a specific subject related to becoming more informed about My Parish, My Commitment, Our Future at St. Mary of the Lake.

Parish Finances Report: Davy Study Findings

This past spring, St Mary’s initiated a study with Davy and Associates to survey parishioners on parish finances. Fifty nine parish households (75 individuals) were interviewed in person or by telephone; 109 households returned a written survey. The number of responses is gratifying because it reveals parishioner understanding and attitudes toward our finances.

Key Findings: The Debt is Top of Mind

The study found that parishioners are very much aware of our debt. They realize it is large and hasn’t been reduced appreciably. This reality draws parishioners to either ask questions about possible ramifications of the debt or to express concerns that the debt could harm the parish. Some parishioners expressed concern that paying the interest and principal on the debt the parish may compromise our ability to fund ministries. Parishioners want something to be done about the debt.

A Range of Reactions

Attitudes could be described as a “full-range” with some respondents ready and willing to step up and work on the debt, and others looking for someone else to pay off the debt. Some people voiced a message of stewardship for the gifts they have received from God, while others lamented the number of campaigns. There were many calls for ownership with phrases like, “everyone should contribute” and “this is our faith home, we need to be responsible for its financial health.”

There were many positive sentiments in the survey. Parishioners were complimentary of our priests, our school and proud of our parish’s outreach ministries. Eight respondents indicated that St. Mary’s has been named a beneficiary in their will and several others indicated a willingness to consider including St. Mary’s in their will. It was encouraging to learn that approximately half of those interviewed and one third of those completing the written survey expressed a willingness to help on a capital campaign.

Concurrent Budget Considerations

At almost the same time as the survey was being taken, our lenders and Archdiocesan representatives began meeting with the parish and suggested that cuts be made to the parish budget to free up funds for paying interest on the debt. We announced in June that church and school staff members were being laid off in order to pay approximately \$242,000 of the \$600,000 in debt service for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011. Our staff has received no pay increases for three consecutive years.

The Bottom Line

The debt is a challenge that needs to be addressed. Our ability to continue to support all of the ministries offered by St. Mary’s is in jeopardy unless we reduce our interest expense and reduce our debt. We cannot live out our gospel calling to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and instruct the young if we are paying large interest amounts.

Resulting Steps

For three weekends over the next two months, we will welcome parishioners to awareness sessions in the church’s St. Joseph’s room. Parish leaders will be available to offer insight into the parish debt situation and finances. Refreshments will be provided.

The following dates are a series of gatherings that all parishioners are encouraged to attend one time during the next few weeks on the designated weekends. These gatherings are designed to be an open sharing of the financial situation at St. Mary of the Lake and the plans for the future. Become informed!

Upcoming Events	Sept. 18	6 PM	Wine and Cheese
	Sept. 19	10 AM and 12 PM	Pastries, coffee, juice
	Oct. 2	6 PM	Wine and Cheese
	Oct. 3	8:30, 10 AM & 12 PM	Pastries, coffee, juice
	Oct. 23	6 PM	Wine and Cheese
	Oct. 24	10 AM and 12 PM	Pastries, coffee, juice

On September 4th-5th, over 180 parishioners attended one of the information sharing sessions noted above. These parishioners were informed about our current financial state and the impact that it has on our general operations and our debt. You are encouraged to attend one of these remaining sessions. We plan to publish some of the frequently asked questions and responses to those questions in the frequently asked questions section.