

Capital Campaign Homily, May 21, 2006  
Father Tim Birney, Pastor

How beautiful are the words today from St. John when he implores us, “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God.” Jesus also speaks of this God-given love, “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete.”

In 1903, a dream of living this love of God was realized by a small band of faith-filled people who made-up the Catholic Community of “Catholic point,” as it was known in those days, building on land that the revered Fr. Gabriel Richard first purchased in 1826 for \$82.33. This would be the third Church built by the growing community- (first a log church, St. Felicite, and second St. Agnes.) In 1903, at a cost of \$45,000, Holy Cross Church was built.

I have often wondered how and why the people of that time were able to build such a magnificent structure. The community was much smaller than we are today, and was, no doubt, not very wealthy. Yet, they dared to build a church that was not only a place to worship in, but truly a landmark of faith.

We are now the heirs of those first parishioners. The mantle of leadership now falls to us, to insure that this church continues to persevere well into the future. Perhaps the larger question to ask is how are we doing, after these 175 years, of living out our Catholic Christian faith in the parish of Holy Cross?

As a parish, we have always placed a strong emphasis on education of our youth, specifically through our parish schools. Even though that has changed somewhat in recent years, the mission has remained the same, and the mission is always what is most important. We continue to do everything possible to keep the option of Catholic education alive and available to people of this area.

As a parish, we also need to work at maintaining our many programs and ministries. We have an active Altar Society, Worship Commission, Parish Council, Stewardship Commission, Ushers Club, Youth Group, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Knights of Columbus, Daughters of Isabella, a variety of school groups, Liturgical ministries, and several Choirs, just to name a few.

As a parish, we are always working at providing the best service to our people. Our staff is very dedicated and hard-working, none of which are compensated what they truly deserve, but they continue to serve our parish well.

As a parish, we have done what we can to always maintain our buildings. In the past 3 years, we have replaced all the bathroom stalls in the Activity Center, brand new sound system in the gym and the church, renovations in the rectory, fixed our Activity Center doors, will soon be landscaping the property, repainting the parking lot, and are always looking for ways to save the parish money through sound preventative maintenance.

How are we able to accomplish all this, and many, many more similar parish activities? Through your generous support and active stewardship of your time, talent, and treasure. Reaching for that inspiration from 103 years ago, we now embark upon a new endeavor- a Capital Campaign we are calling, "Preserving our Landmark of Faith."

I am sure I do not need to speak today much about how crucial it is for us to be a financially viable parish. We have a heavy weight around our necks called debt. Presently, we have already re-paid the original principle, plus another \$300,000 in interest. We have another \$500,000 yet to go. In the end, this would be repaying almost double what the original loan was for. How nice it would be if all that money we send to pay the debt each year, roughly \$80,000, could go the ministries, school, or building issues of our parish.

We also have the obligation to preserve this 'landmark of faith.' If you look at the Church itself, you can readily see that our roof is nearing the end of it's life, our 100 year old stain glass

windows and their protective outer glass are in need of repair and replacement, our boiler is over 40 years old, so now is the time to begin looking into a more efficient replacement that would also include air, and our church steeples which are continually fading and peeling, get worse with each day. Our Campaign will address all of these issues. All added together, the goal of the Campaign is 1 million and 15 thousand dollars. I know this is a lofty goal, but it is one that we can accomplish together.

How will we accomplish this? First of all, we must always remember that we are a community of faith, built upon not just brick and mortar, but the love of God. This is the place that we follow the command to: love one another. Keeping this imperative always in mind, to help us achieve this goal, we have secured the services of a professional fund-raising firm (John V. McCarthy & Assoc), and a group of dedicated parishioners have graciously volunteered to be on the Capital Campaign Committee. Our Co-Chairpersons, Mr. Jack Randolph and Mr. Bob Zweng, will be inviting all of you to attend one of our many receptions that will be offered in the coming weeks. During that time, you will hear first hand about the projects, about our strategy for reaching our goal, and how you can support this endeavor. You will also have the chance to ask questions and seek answers before any pledge will be asked of you. Some of you have already received a letter in the mail, and in the coming weeks, all of you will be receiving one.

What about the CSA this year? This will be addressed at the receptions in more detail, so briefly, we are still doing the CSA. You will be given at the reception, a CSA pledge card, and a Capital Campaign pledge card. We are doing them together, because we are able to save on the 'diocesan tax', if we funnel the money through the CSA drive. Again, more info will be given about this at the receptions.

I know any time the topic of money is brought up in Church, or anywhere, it is never a popular one. I know there are many financial demands placed on all of you. But I also know that you love this church. In the past, the people of this parish have been

very generous in preserving this landmark of faith, and I pray this time it will be no different.

This Campaign is all about preserving something sacred and beautiful, a treasure. Even though I am the one presenting this to you, it is not about me. I am well aware that people often decide to give to a Capital Campaign such as this one, based on their feelings about the pastor. I also know that for some of you, I have been a disappointment, but I truly pray that your feelings about me, will not affect your willingness to support your parish. Pastors, as you all know, come and go, but you, and this church, and its many programs and ministries, remain. I truly wish that every decision I make would be pleasing to all 4,000m plus members of the parish. Being a leader is not always an easy position, so I offer to you my apologies, for anything I may have done to hurt or upset you—for I did not dream, of becoming a priest as a young 18 year old, so that I could make people angry, dislike me, or feel bitter about their parish. I am happy to be working with the members of the committee and to invest all this time with them, because I truly believe it is the right thing to do for our parish at this time in our history.

This weekend, we will together reach for the inspiration of those who have gone before us, of those who dreamed so big, and accomplished so much. Please prayerfully consider attending one of the receptions, before you decide on your participation in this Campaign, so that you can hear the facts and not just the ‘the talk’. For those of you who are not able to make it for one of the receptions, you will be contacted by a member of our Committee for a home-visit.

In the days ahead I ask for your prayers for the success of this Campaign. In this house of faith, we follow the words of Christ to “call each other friends, because Jesus has told us everything that He heard from His Father.” As a friend in Christ, I thank you for all your strong support in the past, and I look forward to walking this journey with you, as together we do all that we can to ‘Preserve our Landmark of Faith.’