



Church of Saint John the Evangelist of Little Canada

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Blessings in this season of Advent! Just as we are preparing our hearts and minds for the coming of the Christchild, so too do we have Pastoral Planning preparation work to report on, as part of my personal commitment to transparency and providing quarterly updates on this process, initiated a year ago with a parish-wide survey.

As you might have noticed in our Financial Report sent with the Stewardship Forms this fall, the past two years have seen us dipping into the reserves to operate the very important ministry of the school. In September, Finance Council approved a three-year plan to right-size these numbers. Critical to the success and longevity of this plan, of course, is increasing awareness and enrollment in our school programs.

September also brought web-contractor eCatholic to our site to capture photography and set goals regarding the new website. I'm pleased to share that, from this process, we have a new logo that will be rolled out with the new website in the New Year! This fresh face for our digital presence is an important step in both our Unity and Welcoming goals, not to mention a key piece to increasing awareness of our school and church programs. A big "thank you" to the Website Committee for painstakingly tackling this project and seeing it through to completion in such a timely fashion.

In October, the newly re-established Stewardship Committee rolled out a fresh effort to encourage sharing of time, talent and treasure, as well as a revised Census strategy that should improve future communication and outreach. The return response rate was 25 percent out of 1,600 mailed, and 52 new ministry sign-ups were received. Phone calls to the remaining 1,200 households took place in November, and the committee will meet in the New Year to advise next steps to take with our renewed Parish Census information. Words cannot express how grateful I am to these hard-working volunteers and committee members—and thank YOU for responding and for your generosity.

As you've seen, there has been increased visibility and energy in the efforts of the school, under direction from principal Dan Hurley. Most notable are the many generous parishioners, parents and other donors who have stepped up to support the school's increased efforts to build a strong Catholic identity and a more robust student experience. The addition of the C-STEM (the "C" is for "Catholic" Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) curriculum, as well as tools such as Chromebooks and interactive media boards, will strengthen the students' academic proficiency; more than \$30,000 was raised in November alone supporting those initiatives. I would like to emphasize that, while exciting for our school today, these investments are key pieces of our strategy toward long-term growth for the school. Investing in enhanced curriculum and marketing, along with building an NAEYC-accredited, 4-star Parent Aware preschool program, should turn around the trends of decreased tuition revenues we reported on back in April, moving us toward our goals of increased school enrollment and connection with the parish community.

As we continue down this very important path, it is my firm desire to lead our parish with openness; as always, I welcome feedback and ideas regarding these Pastoral Planning efforts and initiatives. The new calendar year begins preparation for the next fiscal year, which begins in July: Key actions will include the first phase of bringing the budget into balance. We ask for your prayers and support as we enter this critical planning period, and we will have more to report on in our next scheduled update around Easter.

It is my deep wish for each and every one of you as we approach this Christmas season that you enjoy the love and joy brought by quality time shared with family and friends.

Peace,

Fr. Tom