

Most of you who have kept up with the life of the parish know that a decision was made several years ago by our previous pastor to sell off a portion of the parish property to pay for the construction of the Parish Center next door. That land sale was presented as the answer to the parish's financial needs, promising to bring in \$2.1 million. The structure of the contract, however, actually led to more difficulties financially as it became clear that the land sale was not going to be a quick solution to the parish's needs. This led to a capital campaign that was begun prior to my arrival here. Nevertheless the land sale was still held out as a kind of golden egg. Even when I arrived here 2 1/2 years ago, I was told "the parish has financial issues but there's a land sale that will eliminate the parish's debt."

Well, after 6 years of hopeful waiting, I need to share with you today that the land sale is not going to happen. Issues with the contract, with the developer, with Howard County, and with the economy have all combined to create a very unfortunate scenario for the parish, a scenario that has led to the failure of the land sale and is going to have a significant impact on our parish budget and how we move forward in the coming years, dealing with this \$2 million loss, \$2 million that was not extra, but was already figured into the parish's needs.

There are many layers to all of this and details that the Finance Committee and I would like to share with you. So I want to invite you to attend a parish town hall meeting this Wednesday night at 7pm in the church where we can share with you more of what has happened and the impact it will have.

As you're hearing this, I'm sure that it leaves many of you feeling frustrated, angry, perhaps a bit hopeless as we face what seems to be yet another crisis. Believe me, I have felt all of those things myself. My 2 1/2 years with you have certainly been among the most challenging years that I have ever had to face.

In all of this, I know that the Lord is at work accomplishing something. There is no genuine good or blessing that does not pass through the Cross. We are in that passage through the Cross. We seem to be in a place that brings us to our knees, facing issues that force us to rely upon the Lord. It's a place where our faith is tested, but if we're open, where it can also be purified and grow. A sudden \$2 million loss definitely brings you to your knees.

Some of you may be thinking this is a good time to leave, to jump next door to another parish that doesn't seem to have the issues that we face here. To that, I would simply say that I know the Lord is doing something here in all of this, something not just for parish as a whole, but for each of us who is being asked to have faith in the face of this trial. It is painful. It is frustrating. It is exhausting. But I want to be where the Lord is. And if the Lord is at the Cross, that's where I need to be. And I need you to be here with me.

I've spoken with Archbishop O'Brien and in the coming weeks we will be working with the Archdiocese to find a way our way through this latest struggle. In the meantime, I would ask you to please pray for our parish, that we might be given wisdom, good judgment and above all faith. Today, I choose to trust that this latest setback will only serve to bring us closer to the Lord. And I invite you to join me in that act of faith.

I hope to see you on Wednesday night at 7pm when we can share more at the parish town hall.