

St. Margaret Mary Deanery School Planning...

Hopefully you have been keeping up with articles in the Catholic Telegraph and parish inserts concerning Archdiocesan planning for a time when there may only be 100 pastors. Our goal in the face of a priest shortage, financial crunch and changing pastoral needs, is to continue the mission of Jesus through a vibrant, committed church. We can do this by sharing resources and ministering together in order to make future transitions easier.

St. Margaret Mary Deanery, has approached our planning by developing two separate tracts...(1) Exploring and developing 4 Pastoral Regions and (2) Looking at Catholic Elementary education and how we might devise a Deanery plan. This is a challenging and exciting time for us as Church. This is our time to realize we are a community of believers, not merely geographical groupings. This is our time to assure future generations of Catholics a solid, financially viable education, rooted in the Gospel.

The vision driving our school deanery planning is the following:

“A Catholic School opportunity for the families in the deanery who seek a quality education for their children that is grounded in Catholic Christian values prepares them to meet the challenges.”

We are inviting the parishioners of each parish to be part of the planning process. Please take the time to look over the background information and scenarios in this publication.

BACKGROUND

- Since June 2002, concerned laity, pastors and principals have been discussing the future of Catholic elementary education
- In May 2004 a steering committee was commissioned to devise proposals for the deanery focused on: demographics, enrollment, financial status, facilities, parent participation and educational scenarios

CURRENT TRENDS AND FACTS

- General total enrollment of Catholic Elementary Schools in the deanery is decreasing in a slow, steady pace. The Decline appears to be greatest in the lower grades. While the population of the Deanery will decline over the next 5 years by just over 1 %, the population of children ages 0 - 14 will decline 6%.
- All reporting schools in the deanery are operating at a deficit from \$25,000 - \$560,000 per year. 9 of 13 schools operate with significant annual deficits of \$200,000 or more.
- With declining church collections many parishes have reached the point that it is a significant financial burden to

operate a parish school. As enrollment decreases cost increases, as cost increase, tuition increases and enrollment drops, creating a downward spiral.

- Teachers are underpaid. (Some voluntarily not accepting raises in order to keep the school open.)
- A number of our school buildings Will require major capital improvements. Most facilities are operating well below capacity.

Write down your responses to the questions for EACH possible scenario **before** coming to one of the parish "focus sessions". As you prayerfully reflect on each scenario try not to see yourself as a member of a particular interest group or parish. Focus your energy on the good of the *whole* Deanery and Pastoral region. This is the time to "think outside of the box". This is the time God has called us to be Church. This is the time for you to become part of the process to ensure a vibrant Church and strong Catholic schools in our part of Cincinnati.