

AREA EDUCATION CENTERS

... preparing for the future of Catholic Elementary Schools



The St. Margaret Mary Deanery effort to preserve affordable Catholic Elementary Education has begun. Let's take a look at what's happened over the past couple of months. In the last issue of AssumptionNews, Fr. Bill thanked all who attended the June 15th, 2005 presentation on the school situation. He also offered his appreciation to those of you who provided their feedback at that time or on the web. Many of you preferred a "regional" approach to the situation – a consolidation of schools that would be phased in, as needed, over time. Based on that feedback and discussions with Pastoral Council and the Education Committee, Fr. Bill carried this recommendation to the deanery pastor's meeting last September.

This "regional" approach was in fact adopted by the pastors of St. Margaret Mary Deanery and the archdiocese published an update on this in November. The update provided some historical perspective, as well as presenting the current status. It was noted in this update that Assumption School would be working with St. Margaret Mary, St. Clare, St. Ann and Little Flower schools to explore what are being called "Area Education Centers". In a nutshell, the idea is that the schools that have been grouped together in the deanery will work together to develop plans on how they intend to work towards one Area Education Center for children in their parishes. With the declining school age population in our region, these plans will enable parishes in the deanery to continue to provide affordable Catholic elementary education to all.

The archdiocese update also indicated that St. Bartholomew, Our Lady of the Rosary, St. Vivian and St. James of the Valley would be working together in this effort. Many of you may have already heard that the movement to an Area Education Center for this group has already begun. Starting in 2006-2007, Our Lady of the Rosary students will be attending St. Bartholomew's. Well, that really isn't exactly correct. Given that the goal is to create a new entity ... an Area Education Center ... St. Bartholomew's will be renaming their school to clearly signal the change. There's even discussion about changing uniforms in the future. You can learn more about this effort at a website they've recently created at <http://www.transitiontoourfuture.org/>.

Over the coming years, students from Corpus Christi parish and St. John Neumann parish who currently attend St. Bartholomew school will leave this newly created school to create their own new regional school with St. John the Baptist.

So what does it look like for our students here in Assumption parish?

The truth is, we don't know yet. We do know that St. Clare may not be involved with us in this effort as originally planned. St. Clare announced on Jan 8th that it would indeed be closing their school at the end of this school year and they have petitioned the archdiocese to attend the new school being formed at St. Bartholomew's since that effort was already well underway.

The remaining parishes (St. Margaret Mary, St. Ann, Little Flower & Assumption) have all chosen representatives to serve on six new committees being formed. These committees and Assumption's representatives are as follows: Communications - Bill Rocklin; Technology & Facilities - Rick Reder; Finance - Jim Schultz; Governance - Kathy Lorenz; Religious Education & Parish Life - Clare Stentz; Personnel- Annette Braun. These committees will meet no later than the end of February to begin their efforts to define how we will progress. We will routinely report on their efforts.

Well, that's all we know at this time. To paraphrase the archdiocese update ... Will Catholic elementary school be different? Most definitely. Will it be better? With God's grace it will. Change is rarely easy ... especially when the details of the change are unknown. But change also provides opportunity. With a new beginning, we have a chance to correct problems that may exist, and make improvements that we couldn't do on our own. Let's all work together to not only continue to provide affordable Catholic education .. but to IMPROVE on it!

- Pastoral Council

Note: The Assumption Pastoral Council remains committed to keeping the parish updated on all efforts on this front. Look for this report and all the previous reports mentioned above, as well as future reports at <http://www.assumptionthehealthy.org/StMMDSchoolUpdate>.

If you have any ideas that may help our effort or questions/concerns in a particular area, please contact Fr. Bill, any of the committee representatives mentioned above, and of course, any member of the pastoral council. You can also use the feedback form on the web site listed above to provide feedback or ask a question.