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My dear parishioners:

As it begins to draw to a close, I hope that the summer of 2008 was an enjoyable one for you. As usual, the days of July were quiet ones around the office, but they were also busy ones as we tried to finish the various projects that surfaced as a result of our water line breaks in May. I did want to take this opportunity to share with you some information about several issues.

Since many of you have been asking me, I am happy to tell you that construction has finally begun on the new Catholic Charities facilities. As often happens, there were unforeseen delays as zoning issues and architectural changes had to be dealt with. Catholic Charities is going to make every effort to keep us all informed on the progress. I hope you saw the brief article in a recent issue of the Eastern Oklahoma Catholic.

The fiscal year closed on June 30th, the Finance Committee has made a preliminary review of the year, the auditors have already begun their work and a summary report on the year will be forthcoming from the Finance Committee. Despite unforeseen emergency expenditures, we once again closed the year in a very positive position. This was possible because of your continued generous support of the parish and because of the good stewardship that the staff exercises over the resources that you provide for them.

The first day of school was August the 14th and everyone agrees that we are off to a good start. We have near capacity enrollment and quite a number of new families. As usually happens, there were several faculty changes and so we have a couple of teachers who are new to the faculty and several who have returned after a number of years of not teaching. I personally don't believe that you could find a more dedicated group of men and women anywhere. I encourage you to pray for them each day that the Lord will guide them as they work with our children. Once again we have a fine School Board. There are a great many challenges facing Catholic Schools across the country and our Board has to help us find ways to meet those challenges here at St. Mary's. Not the least of the challenges are financial ones and an important financial resource for us is our Educational Endowment Trust. The corpus of the Trust is now over \$1,400,000.00 but if the annual income from the Trust is going to have a major positive impact on the school budget, it needs to be several times this amount. We will probably have to settle for less than Harvard and Notre Dame have but let's keep our sights set high!

Last spring and through the summer, those staff members involved with our catechetical, youth and religious education programs at all levels, have been studying ways to improve our programs. I will not attempt to explain all that has been and will be happening in this letter, but I do want to strongly encourage you to study the information you will be receiving. At the heart of what is happening is a renewed effort to involve families in the programs as well as offer learning and faith formation opportunities for all the adults of the parish. If we are going to live our faith in these challenging times, then we must know and love it.

Many of you have ask me when the Mass schedule will be changing. One thing is clear. We do need a summer schedule (Memorial Day thru Labor Day) and will probably do that next year. My current plan is to see how the new timing of some of our education programs will affect attendance at the various Masses and, if it is needed , to make some adjustment at the beginning of the new year. Mentioning this topic also gives me the opportunity to say, quite bluntly I might add, that many of us need to reevaluate our commitment to keep Holy the Lord's Day. At the very heart and center of our Catholic Faith is our belief in the Eucharist and hopefully an understanding that a casual or lukewarm commitment to Sunday Mass is an expression of the weakness and not the strength of our faith. Attendance at Sunday Mass should be for us the center of what happens on Sunday and not something we do when we can simply "fit it in". The only way our children will learn this is through the strong modeling of those of you who are their parents.

Lest this begins to be as long as a keynote talk at a convention, allow me to close by saying that these are exciting and challenging times to be alive, to be a Catholic and to be a member of St. Mary's.

With every best wish, I ask to remain

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Msgr. Dorney". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Rev. Msgr. Dennis C. Dorney, Pastor