

St. Bernard Church

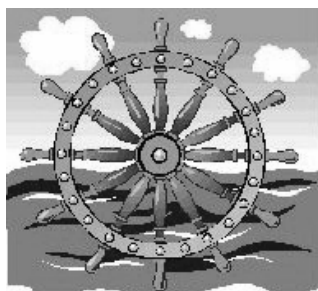
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Issue 17

October 12, 2003

STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT



Steering Committee

Tom Orsi, Chair
Jane Allen
Francis Dwyer
Martha Dwyer
Arlene Gardiner
John Gibbons
Elizabeth McGrath
Walter Pannone
Raymond Vallee

Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us. We thank you especially for setting us at tasks which demand our best efforts, and hold the promise for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight. Be present with us as we work together: make us responsive to your will and give to us a healthy pride in all we do that we may be good stewards of all things entrusted to us. May the prayers of our patron Bernard help us to keep in mind the wise counsel given long ago "whoever would climb to a lofty height must go by steps, not leaps."

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen

THIS WEEK

On Tuesday evening, the Steering Committee held an informational meeting on the possibility of building a new Catholic school at St. Bernard's. Led by Committee Chair Tom Orsi, the presentation outlined why we were there, the Diocesan perspective, the Meitler Study that indicated that there was a need for a school, the various models for a school, financing options and finally, what the Committee believes are the next steps. Unfortunately, there was not a strong turnout at the meeting. Maybe it was the night, or maybe it was the time, or maybe, the interest is just not there.

Whether or not to build a school is a huge decision. Whatever the Parish decides in 2003 will impact not only the current parishioners, but school-aged children and their parents in South County for years to come. It will also impact the future of St. Bernard Parish. The existence of a school has an enormous impact on a parish. A school can change the atmosphere and focus of a parish. Since the Parish has this incredible opportunity to make this decision, we need to be sure that it is an informed decision, and not one that we will regret 10 years from now.

If there is interest, the Committee is willing to offer the school presentation again. Those who attended said the presentation was worthwhile and informative. If you have an interest in creating a new school in our parish, please let us know what night would be convenient for you, or if a Saturday morning may be better. Would you like us to provide babysitting?

An informed decision is a smart decision.

Question for Sunday, October 12, 2003

Would you be interested in attending a weekday evening meeting on the School issue? _____ Saturday morning? _____

Would you need us to provide babysitting? _____

Please drop your response in the collection baskets or send an email to steering_committee@sbcwickford.org. Thanks for your response!

Diocese of Providence Catholic School Report

(from the Providence Visitor September 13, 2003)

The Steering Committee's e-mail address: steering_committee@sbwickford.org Please make a note of it and keep sending your questions, thoughts and responses.

Have a safe Columbus Day Weekend.



- ❖ 18,000 students were enrolled in 58 RI Catholic schools on the first day of classes this year.
- ❖ Enrollment is slightly down this year, less than one percent. Largely due to declines in the urban, inner-city populations.
- ❖ Catholic secondary school enrollment increased for the fourth consecutive year, climbing more than two percent.
- ❖ Elementary school enrollment stands at 12,840, a decline of two percent from last year.
- ❖ The 13 Catholic elementary schools in the suburban communities grew by one percent, an increase of 54 students.
- ❖ Greater increases were prevented by capacity enrollment at several suburban schools.
- ❖ Mgr. Clarke Regional School experienced a 12 percent increase due to the addition of two classrooms of seven grade. Enrollment is expected to increase again next year when the school will offer eight grade.
- ❖ Brother William Dygert, Superintendent of Schools, reported that the slight loss in enrollment could be linked to the decline in the economy.
- ❖ Economic downturns in recent years have affected Catholic school enrollments across the country, according to Brother William.
- ❖ Enrollment statistics emphasize two challenges facing Catholic education:
 - ~ to keep education affordable with tuition assistance
 - ~ to keep education available in developing areas by building new schools
- ❖ The diocese is working on the first challenge by continuing its efforts to raise tuition assistance funds through its development program, highlighted by the upcoming annual *Anchor of Hope* gala. (*The gala held in September raised ~ \$235,000 for tuition assistance.*)
- ❖ The diocese will also continue to support legislation to establish a "Scholarship Tax Credit."
- ❖ The diocese is also working to establish new Catholic elementary schools and expand existing ones.