

December 12, 2004

To be read from the Pulpit at all the Masses the weekend of December 11-12, 2004

My dear people of God at St. Patrick's,

As was planned, Fr. Lastiri is now at St. Luke's Institute in Maryland, which is a therapeutic facility to help clergy deal with and struggle to overcome different types of addictions. I ask you to please keep him very much in your prayers, so that with God's grace this extended program will enable him to overcome his problem and to begin anew to serve God's people.

After questions of possible financial discrepancies were brought to my attention, I asked our Diocesan Finance Officer to look into the financial matters at St. Patrick's. To do a thorough review, a good deal of time was needed. The report was nearing completion this last week, but now that I have received a number of requests from parishioners for an audit, I have directed our Diocesan Finance Officer to work with the Parish Finance Council to review his findings and the financial records and to have the Parish Finance Council issue the report.

The Parish Finance Council would be the ones to advise me and your pastor whether there is need for either a financial review or audit, depending on their findings. Sad to say before this study could be finalized the questions of financial discrepancies were made public before I could respond responsibly, which caused much rumor and gossip in the community. I want to emphasize that this is not a matter of any misappropriation of large funds, and concerns the questioning of the use of funds of some budget items that are infinitesimal in relation to the total budget. This will come out with the report of the Parish Finance Council.

My response to the few letters and petitions I have received regarding the parish finances is found in this letter to the people of God. I encourage everyone to strongly support Msgr. McCormick who would lead the parish forward in healing and with God's grace to overcome the sad disunity that has come to the community. In this Eucharistic year proclaimed by our Our Holy Father, may we find in Our Lord Jesus in the Eucharist, God's love, forgiveness and the way to unity and love with one another. God bless you and your families very, very much.

In Christ, our Lord,



Bishop John T. Steinbock  
Bishop, Diocese of Fresno