

**Good afternoon/morning.**

**My name is Peter Fagan. As President of the Church of the Resurrection Pastoral Council it is my responsibility, but also my honor to speak with you about what has become the annual the state of the parish report. Following my report, Kelly Ryan, Chair of the Finance Committee, will present you with the parish financial report. Both reports are required by Archdiocesan regulations.**

**We hear today's Scripture readings, especially the Gospel of Matthew, in the context of the autumn of 2008 when our country is entering into the most severe economic crisis in seventy years. Yes, the hungry and the homeless, the unemployed and the immigrants, the disappearing pension funds and the foreclosed homes in our own neighborhoods are all too apparent to us. If we are to consider a State of the Parish report, it must be done in the context of this historical moment. This economic hour is the context and the judgment words of Jesus in Matthew 25 are the standard by which we must attempt to report on ourselves as a Roman Catholic parish.**

**When Jesus speaks of hunger, thirst, alienation, poverty, illness, imprisonment, he is certainly speaking of physical and social realities. But these conditions are also spiritual realities. Among us today people walk, even in their apparently abundant material surroundings, in a quiet despair without faith and searching for love.**

**I can report to you that the members of the Church of the Resurrection minister to both material and spiritual needs. Time does not permit naming all of our ministries. I will, however, highlight a few parish responses to the words of Jesus in Matthew 25.**

**First, our parish responds to real hunger. With the leadership of Sister Rita Ricker we have a seven-year Twinning Relationship with a parish in the hill country of Haiti -the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Our support of our sister parish school, Pierre Toussaint School, enables 180 school children to eat something each day. Locally parishioners also are active in local organizations that feed the hungry such as Shepherd's Table, Eastern Montgomery Emergency Assistance Network and our own parish food pantry.**

**Secondly, our parish responds to thirst for the life of the Spirit. I can report to you that our Riderwood parishioners recognized this thirst and took action. Although they have two Masses on Sunday and at least one midweek Mass, many felt the need for more spiritual nourishment. With the guidance of the Pastoral Associate Linda Carey, they developed a Friday Communion Service, designed and led by themselves. Every Friday they gather and are fed with the Word of Life and with the Body of our Lord. With the decreasing number of priests and therefore their availability to celebrate the Eucharist, our senior parishioners at Riderwood are likely giving us a glimpse of how the Spirit – working through caring persons – might provide spiritual nourishment.**

**We too, in this assembly, thirst for Liturgy celebrated prayerfully; music that lifts the soul of the community and preaching that helps us to live in faith one more week. Judging from the responses of the Parish Survey that we completed in January of this year, Resurrection Parish weekend Masses do feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty among us.**

**We are grateful to our pastor, Father Keffer and the priests who celebrate our Masses. We are grateful to our Music Director, Annick Kanter-St. Hubert, and the members of all the choirs. And we thank our talented organist, Richard Fitzgerald, who guided the selection of the new organ. Its purchase was made possible through the generosity of parishioners. We hope that its use will both enhance the liturgy and expand the new Sunday Night Concert series. Jesus' words, **"I was a stranger and you welcomed me"**.**

**Our parish is one microcosm of the blending of cultures that is occurring in our world and, especially, in our country.**

**The Pastoral Council has, in response to your comments in the Survey, set two specific goals: the first is to develop a ministry that pro-actively welcomes new members of the parish and invites their participation in parish ministries. Jon Thomas, a seminarian soon to be ordained, is leading this initiative.**

**And secondly, the Pastoral Council is working to develop a first-class parish website in which we can be informed of parish events; coordinate our various ministries and events; and through helpful links be connected to kindred spirits and ministries throughout the world. The parish has hired a webmaster, but there is much work to be done with our webpage. We invite your suggestions.**

**A sacramental welcoming into the Church is active in the Rite of Initiation in the Church for Adults under the leadership of our Director of Adult Faith Formation, Tammy O'Donnell. There are 5 candidates and about 25 parishioners involved in this program. We shall meet them as a group in the Liturgies of Advent.**

**Our Youth Faith Formation program, under the direction of Helene Stever, continues with wonderful energy as our youth are nurtured into a mature Faith and, over the years, welcomed into the adult faith community. Our youth participate throughout the year in faith formation classes, service projects, CYO athletics, scouts, spiritual and social activities. We have over 200 youth in grades K-12 enrolled in the Monday Religious Education classes. New this year are Sunday morning Religious Education classes offered for 80 youth in grades K-6.**

**I would like to close with some observations about the Parish Survey that we conducted last January. Its full results and the Recommendations of the Pastoral Council are available to you on the parish webpage. Three brief comments.**

- 412 members of the parish completed the survey. Estimating 1750 attendees at weekend Masses, we had a 24% response rate. Those who responded did so thoughtfully, providing us with over 1100 comments and suggestions on their perception of parish life. In general the respondents reported a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of parish life. We do not know, of course, what the other three quarters, who did not complete the survey, think.**
- There were multiple requests for more adult faith formation and observations about deficiencies in the sound system. Both have resulted in actions. Tammy O'Donnell has been hired as Director of Adult Faith Formation and Fr. Keffer continues his seminars on the Letter of St. Paul. A new sound system with aids for the hearing impaired has been purchased and installed.**
- Going forward, the Pastoral Council has noted that of the 412 respondents in the survey, there were only 19 from the 19 to 35 age group. The 19 respondents represent only 1% of the total members at Mass on weekends. This group of young adults is the future Church. From the Survey, we do not know them or what their experience of parish and Church is. We recognize this as a challenge for us both in our families and as a parish family. We need our young adults; we also need to provide a spiritual home in which their vitality can be welcomed and nourished.**

**“I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”**

**There is nothing in the words of Jesus that says we have to care for others through the parish or through the Church. However, our parish is one place for us – perhaps a privileged one because of shared faith and friendship - in which we can care for others in need. Each of us listens to the words of Jesus and makes our choice of responding.**

**As we hear the words of Jesus about how we and our parish will ultimately be “reported on”, may we take the gifts we have been given and continue to give back generously. In the autumn of 2008, when the hungry and the homeless, the unemployed and the estranged, the ill and the worried are present as they have not been in most of our lifetimes, may our response be one of seeing Jesus in each other, and in ourselves.**

**I thank you.**

*Peter J. Fagan*

**President, Resurrection Parish Council**

**November 22-23, 2008.**