

ST. JOSEPH PARISH CENTER FUNDS A Short History

It was about 1987 that I had a talk with Jim and Kay Warta. Jim and Kay were very close friends of Fr. Savage, S.J. the former pastor (1962-1983) Jim Warta was the person who first started Cable TV in Mammoth. In the late sixties or the early 70s, Jim called a meeting of all his friends in Mammoth Lakes. He outlined to them a plan in which he would put up a TV antenna on top of Mammoth Mountain and would then connect everyone present to this antenna so that they could have TV in their homes. To accomplish this, he wanted to borrow from each person present, \$100 so that he could buy the necessary supplies. He also explained that if anyone else wanted to be connected to the antenna system, they would then be charged. Thus, the first Cable TV was established in Mammoth Lakes. Jim returned to everyone their \$100 and as far as I know, gave them free access after that. Our Church has benefited from this ever since.

My talk with Jim and Kay was after a dinner at the rectory. I told them about my dream of one day having a Parish Center and explained to them all the benefits that would accrue. I was not asked them for any financial help – only sharing with them my dream. Shortly thereafter Jim and Kay's eldest son, Hank, was killed in an automobile accident in Clovis (outside of Fresno) where the Wartas had moved. It was also around this time that Jim and Kay decided to sell their Cable TV business. Once sold, they gave to each of their 9 living children \$350,000 and they decided to St. Joseph's church Hank's portion so that a Parish Center could be built.

Every Christmas Jim gave \$50,000 to St. Joseph's parish, deposited in a Wells Fargo Bank where they did their banking. Eventually this sum grew to \$300,000 and then Jim suffered a fatal heart attack and died. The family was no longer that interested in funding a Parish Center.

Not knowing quite what to do with the Parish Center funds, I invested them with Schroder through a visitor whom I had gotten to know well and who worked with Schroder. In the beginning the funds were all in long term CD's and interest was accumulating. Schroder was absorbed with Wertheim and then later with Oppenheimer and finally with another stock brokerage firm, all the time with interest accumulating.

In 1998 I spoke with Kay Warta and she agreed that we could use the money to pay off not only the Parish Debt of some \$263,000 but all other debts owed by the parish, particularly a small loan from the Parish Center Fund for the Den of Piety.

The money remaining was then put into this Parish Center Account and sat there accumulating interest. In the spring of 2000 I contacted Michael Walsh and Associates about the possibility of raising money to build the Center. He came here and we had an informal meeting in the home of Don and Jody Sage with several parishioners present while Mike Walsh made his proposal. (present: Fr. Dachauer and Br. Dann, Don and Jody Sage, Darla and Fred Howley, Tom and Cathy Cage.) It was agreed to have a feasibility study done.

The study showed that it was quite possible to raise \$3,000,000, and so we contracted with Walsh and Associates to guide us through the fund raising process. Mr. Paul Quin was assigned as our advisor. Much effort was put into this campaign, but as time went on, it was becoming more and more evident that Mr. Quin couldn't get the idea of our parish, a parish in which 95% of all parishioners didn't live here. In early fall of last year, Mr. Quin gave his final slide show to all those present after Mass. This was very poorly done, the showing of people was extremely small, and there was a growing resentment of Mr. Quin and the way he was trying to force us into a normal parish mold. After the slide show, I thanked Mr. Quin and told him that we would no longer need his services.

Since then, I have had to build up confidence among the Local Parishioners and this has been a very hard and traumatic experience for me personally. Somehow, much of the enthusiasm has eroded, and there are those who seem to firmly opposed a Parish Center.

At present, this Parish Center fund is a holding fund and is used for various expenses necessary to raising money, such as Architect fees, mailing fees, and a number of incidental fees and costs for some who have helped in these efforts. It is time now to send a substantial percentage of the fund to the Diocese rather than keep the funds here. This is following Diocesan procedure. A number of persons including myself, have grave fears that once these funds are in the hand of the Diocese, we may have great difficult in ever having them released for our use. This has happened once recently, and this has not helped bolster my trust.