

**Immaculate Heart of Mary Town Hall Meeting
Questions & Answers
12-9-2015**

Increasing Parish Participation/Resources

1. What is or will be done to reach those families that currently give \$0 on Sunday to personally reconsider their giving level? How can we reach outside the core supporters?

We are going to work on creating a sense of ownership for every parishioner of IHM. We think that's first and foremost. We want to help our parishioners understand that we are their church, they "own" the parish, and it benefits each of them to support the good works of the parish. There are many ways to go about this, of course.

Several years ago, we conducted a program designed to increase offertory giving. We reached out to every registered family in the parish and highlighted their current level of giving, suggested a giving amount based on income, and asked them to prayerfully consider their situation. The program had variable results.

We are certainly open to suggestions, but we think that many of the steps we're taking to be a more inclusive and welcoming church will contribute to this end (please keep reading this document to learn about some of those). While this is not a new concern or one that is unique to us, we think we can help to improve it. One of the key ways is to engage our core parishioners, the more than 750 families that come to Mass every Sunday. When our own faiths are on fire, when we are excited by the wonderful parish we have and the good things happening here, then we naturally become ambassadors in the community.

It is important to note that while overall giving is down, the amount of giving per engaged family is actually up. That is very encouraging and gives us great hope for the future. We'd also like to note that we've started online giving and that we are now printing collection totals each week in the bulletin to make that information more readily available. We are also working to communicate better our plans for the future to gain interest and support.

Please do share your thoughts and suggestions on how we can help get more families intimately involved with IHM. We welcome them.

2. Is it possible that the parish is part of the problem? There are many people concerned about the elimination of contemporary music at Sunday masses, the introduction of more chant, and what some interpret as judgmental homilies that could alienate young families—those we need to engage if we are to grow our church.

We are happy to report that we are going to work with our music director on ways to create more opportunities for contemporary music during Sunday Masses. We understand that many parishioners and potential parishioners are looking for what they

feel are more expressive ways to worship within their Catholic faith tradition. We are happy to look at ways to do that.

As we do this, we will also continue to choose music that is liturgical—in other words, music that supports the Liturgy of the Mass. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), which comes out of Vatican II states: “The main place should be given, all things being equal, to Gregorian chant, as being proper to the Roman Liturgy. Other kinds of sacred music, in particular polyphony, are in no way excluded, provided that they correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action and that they foster the participation of all the faithful” (par. 41). Our wonderful, 2,000-year-old faith gives us many beautiful aspects of liturgy like chant and the Latin language—traditions that we certainly want to continue to honor. That said, we appreciate the concern about chant. While we are hopeful that many parishioners continue to grow in appreciation of chant and what it brings to Mass, please know that we are aware of this concern and have already reduced the occasions in which it is used.

We invite all interested parishioners to join the choir. Please add your voices and your ideas and contribute to the beauty of our liturgical music. We are working with our talented music ministers now on the music needs/wants for our parish and we'll report back as soon as we have an update.

To answer the second part of the question, we certainly hope that our homilies are received in the same way as we intend, which is to instruct lovingly in the ways of Jesus. Homilies are meant to “open the Scriptures” to us. Sometimes the message—Jesus’s message—is challenging for all of us. The first followers of Christ experienced the same feelings we have and said to Jesus, “This saying is hard. Who can accept it?” (Jn. 6:60). This question is fair, natural and we thank the person that asked it. We appreciate the opportunity to remind our parish family members that we love you and intend no discomfort for you. But we would not be fulfilling our mission as your shepherds if we watered down Jesus’ message or only proclaimed those truths that are popular and easy to hear.

We live in a very permissive society. Too many Christians today judge their own actions and thoughts against those of their neighbor. The true comparison is to Jesus. While our mission is love and acceptance, we must practice the “Spiritual Work of Mercies,” which include “instruct the ignorant” and “admonish the sinner.” We want you all to know that we always prayerfully consider our words and ask the Holy Spirit to give us the right ones that will best serve all of us. We are reminded of a college chaplain who recently answered a similar complaint that his sermons made the assembly squirm in their seats. He responded like this: “That feeling you have is called guilt.” While there may have been a kinder, gentler way to respond, we think he gets to an important point. Sometimes when things are hard to hear, we recommend quietly asking God to let you listen as He does and not as society does. It’s possible that you may hear it differently. If not, please remember that our message is Jesus’ and we are here to answer any of your questions about what was said. Feedback—advice or criticism—is welcome and we will happily respond to your concerns.

3. Is there a way that we can use more of our parish family’s talents when things need to be done around school? Perhaps we can put out a list of wishes.

Should we require families to volunteer so many hours per child activities/sports?

We hope so! We are so grateful when our talented parishioners step up and volunteer to put their time and talent into addressing a need at our parish. We will formalize a communication soon, but if you are reading this and have a skill set that you could “lend” to the parish, please do let the parish office know or send Deacon Greg an email. We are embarking on a process to both identify the skills and talents needed, our “wish list” so to speak, and then we’ll work to match our needs with the talents available.

We’ve already had some significant successes with this approach. Prior to the Town Hall, we started a review of our technology and HVAC contracts and those reviews were led by parishioners who are experts in those fields. The review of the IT contact has already saved us thousands of dollars!

On the second part of the question, we believe that a requirement to volunteer is challenging and difficult to enforce. However, we do believe there are many parish and school parents who can find several hours over the course of the year to volunteer so we expect them to do that. More than that, we want them to want to volunteer because they appreciate what their sacrifices mean to the health and vitality of IHM—and because it is in giving that we receive.

We know that there are many families who are willing to help, but who are unsure of how to get started. We are committed to finding ways to better communicate the many options available for volunteering time, talent and treasure to our church. There really is something for everybody. We need to do a better job of letting people know of the opportunities so that those who are willing to assist can better choose and plan. More to come on that soon.

To specifically answer the question about volunteer requirements and sports/activities, there is currently an expectation for families of our student athletes to assist in hosting athletic events for IHM teams. Third- and fourth-grade basketball parents volunteer for eight hours during the season, and middle school basketball players also volunteer throughout the season. At this time, we don’t require additional hours beyond these as IHM families do pay fees for their son or daughters to play IHM sports. Please note that any volunteering expectations set by the parish and school would be in addition to those required by the sports committee.

To all the volunteers of our parish and school, thank you.

4. Why isn’t youth group promoted more in our school, religious education program and church? We should all be encouraging all our youth to participate. Our youth group is an excellent way to help our young people stay true to the faith.

We agree that the Youth Group is excellent and a wonderful form of outreach to young people. We currently promote Youth Group within age-appropriate section of our Parish Religious Education Program (RAP). The Youth Minister speaks with parents the first night of the RAP program to talk about the Youth Group. Emails reminders are sent to families in advance of when special events like retreats and ski trips are upcoming and

four class periods per year are dedicated to the RAP students attending the EDGE program. We also use the Sunday bulletin, Youth Ministry bulletin board, social media, our website, flyers, emails, texts and the smartphone app.

We regularly seek opportunities to improve communication with the school and truly engage the students in youth ministry. For example, we just debuted our new responsive website and launched our smartphone app. We are in the process of expanding the role of our existing PR/Marketing Committee to look at additional communication touchpoints. Please, if you have suggestions or would like to help on the Committee, we invite you to contact us and share your ideas because we are absolute believers in the power of our youth ministry to engage and nurture spiritual growth and contribute to the vitality of our parish. Our IHM Youth Ministry has helped shape the faith life of three priests, several seminarians, one nun, two campus ministers, several high school religion teachers, many helping careers such as social workers and nurses, Catholic couples who met through their involvement in youth ministry, and countless moms and dads who are now raising their own children in the Catholic faith. We are also pleased that our priests are involved in this ministry to our youth. One of them is at almost all events and meetings.

5. I would suggest a parish staffer or parish council member periodically convene a meeting of all parish programs serving youth (school, religious, education, sports, youth group, scouts, etc.) Youth are our future. How are we serving them? How can we improve? How can/should we work together?

Our newly formed Education Advisory Board has been tasked with reviewing all educational programs within the parish, and is in the process of doing so. Our Parish Council has also launched a Strategic Planning initiative that will study in great detail our strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. We look forward to sharing the results of these reviews and plans in the near future.

In the meantime, we absolutely agree with the premise of this question—that youth are our future and that we need to do more to work together and find opportunities for growth and improvement. One way we'll do this is to better communicate about all the opportunities available; increasing participation in these groups; and getting the parish involved in more of their activities. We want the adults in our parish, the parents and grandparents, to see what the youth in our parish are doing, and in reverse, we want our youth familiar with the great adult faith formation and fellowship opportunities so they know what is available once they enter adulthood themselves.

Integrating our youth and adult activities will foster familiarity among us and that breeds advocacy and excitement about what's happening at IHM.

For those who are not aware of some of our youth activities, here is a quick list: IHM Youth Ministry, IHM sports, American Heritage Girls, Girl Scouts, Knights of Columbus Squires, and Boy/Cub Scouts. Father Norton offers a high school male prayer/Bible Study group and Karen Gutzeit is starting a high school female prayer/Bible Study group. Many of these ministries are in need of additional volunteers—please let us know if you are willing to assist by contacting the parish office.

6. Could we save money on the gym floor replacement by being smarter about what is played/done on the floor? For example, should we stop allowing skating on the gym floor to avoid refinishing so frequently?

We appreciate the question and this specific feedback. For many years, the school's gym department has been holding a "Skate time" activity during PE class for grades three-eight. The skates used for this activity are specifically designed to be used indoors on wood surfaces and designed not to damage the floor's surface. The IHM gym department works with a specific company to obtain the skates to ensure that all equipment meets this specification. Currently the gym floor is refinished once per year, with the expense being paid by the Sports Committee from proceeds raised through the grade school basketball league. If you would like to discuss this issue further, we invite you to reach out to IHM school administration.

7. Is there a way that we could save money on envelopes for those that do online giving?

Good question. First, if anyone who is giving online no longer wishes to receive envelopes, we will be happy to stop having them sent since this will, indeed, save us money. To stop receiving envelopes, please contact Mary Brady, our parish secretary, at mbrady@ihm-ky.org or phone ext. 224.

We have chosen not to automatically stop sending envelopes when someone signs up online because many people still wish to have something to put in the collection basket on Sundays. (In fact, the envelopes themselves have a box to check that says, "I've given online.") There are two reasons that people wish to still use their envelope on Sundays. First, it could be because they feel those around them watching with disapproval if they don't put something in the collection basket. While you can debate the merit of this reason, it is completely understandable. Secondly, there is something very Catholic and sacramental about physically putting something in the basket that will be brought to the Lord's altar. For these people, their envelope helps them to focus their mind and heart on what Mass is all about. We think that this is a wonderful use of your envelopes and encourage it.

School & Parish Image

8. What we feel is important can be measured by what we display. While I love sports and my kids playing, I question the placement of the huge banners for 8th graders in the gym. This seems to place far too much emphasis on the athletics and places the individual over team, school, and parish. Shouldn't this practice end?

First, thank you for your feedback. The Sports Committee agrees with the comment that "what we feel is important can be measured by what we display." We believe that, as a parish, we should celebrate more of the great things that all of our students are doing week in and week out. Rather than not celebrating the hard work and dedication of our 8th grade student athletes, we would encourage the parish and school to more enthusiastically celebrate the great accomplishments of our academic teams, drama club, children's choir, National Honor Society and more.

The practice of placing banners in the gym to celebrate our 8th grade student-athletes started in 2014. At that time, the gym walls contained 20+ banners celebrating performance of teams from years past. The banners were on average 10-13 years old and in most cases were showing their age. The age and condition of the banners prompted the sports committee to embark on a project to replace them with newer, nicer looking items to adorn the walls of the gym. The gym walls are off white; some form of decoration or accessory is necessary to make the gym look less sterile.

Separately, each year, the sports committee gives a gift to all 8th graders that participate in any IHM sponsored sport. For the few years prior to 2014, the 8th graders received an electronic “picture book” with images of them, and their teams, participating in sports throughout their 8th grade season(s). In an effort to look for new and different ways to celebrate our student-athletes, and as a way to spruce up the gym during the school year, the sports committee decided to replace the picture book gift with the 8th grade banners. Each 8th grade student athlete that participates on an IHM sponsored athletic team is recognized with a banner. The student athletes then receive their banner as a gift at the 8th grade sports banquet at the end of the school year.

The feedback last year from the parents and 8th graders was overwhelmingly positive. Additionally, IHM hosts other schools throughout the year for basketball and volleyball leagues. During these games the feedback from other schools’ parents and students has been very positive. The cost of the banners is paid entirely by the Sports Committee, and all of the labor involved in producing, hanging and taking down the banners is performed by Sports Committee volunteers.

All this being said, the Sports Committee welcomes the feedback on this and any topic related to the athletic programs at Immaculate Heart of Mary, please feel free to contact Jason Lenihan, at 859-240-4320 or by e-mail at jasonlenihan@msn.com

9. Can we better promote the things the school does to the parish like drama club and academic achievements? Could doing these things help us to build school spirit in the parish, like having stickers/license plates and spirit wear displayed and available?

Yes, we think so and we agree on the need to do so. It’s a great suggestion. The newly formed PR/Marketing Subcommittee of the newly formed Educational Advisory Board has taken steps in 2015 in this direction. First, we researched and adopted a tagline for the school: **Reach Higher**. We also slightly altered the logo to make it more reader-friendly and developed magnets for your car. We will look to do more in 2016—and we really like the idea of getting that spirit and tagline promoted through Spirit Wear. We will look at that and other ways to get more of the school marketing tools into the parish in the New Year as well as additional ways to promote the school and church to one another.

PIT Crew

10. How does the ‘PIT Crew’ provide feedback to the school parents and get the parents involved? Specifically individual child’s progress/challenges.

Thank you for this question; we get this a lot. While feedback suggests that the PIT Crew is one of the key advantages for students of IHM School and one that distinguishes us from other schools, we know we need to do a better job of communicating more about it to the parents. As of this writing, our school is looking at ways to better detail this for them.

We do want to emphasize that because what the PIT Crew measures are essential skills (skills that all students must have to be successful at the next level), we do not provide parents or students with “study materials” for assessments. It is imperative that parents are not preparing students for assessments at home. Parents can determine progress by how the student moves through each intervention cycle—and that’s what we need to do a better job at communicating what that is and what is involved. Please stay tuned for more on this.

11. Please don’t cut the PIT crew. I think this is an excellent selling point to potential new students, especially since funding is tight for new books and/or technology. And I would like to see more communication regarding where my child is on the spectrum. My child is in 3rd grade and I’ve only heard of her reading fluency. No news is not necessarily good.

We have no intention of cutting the PIT Crew because mastery of essential skills like math fact fluency and reading fluency guarantees success within each content area and is communicated within the everyday structure of classroom teaching. That said, we will continue to look at all areas of the school to determine the best allocation of resources so that we can continue to provide the best education available for our students.

The PIT Crew is comprised of intervention cycles, and the work within them is formative but not summative. For example, data collected from a formative assessment (not graded) “forms” the direction of instruction for the next class. Summative information is collected “after” the instruction (is graded) and does not form the instruction. Graded work is communicated to parents by the classroom teacher whereas formative assessment within each intervention cycle is not communicated so that our PIT crew evaluation is not biased.

Budget

12. According to the bulletin it looks like we are always at a deficit. What happens to this and does it get covered at the end of the year by the Diocese or does the deficit carry over to next fiscal year?

The offertory giving numbers published in the bulletin are the actual dollars received from parishioners who support the parish, and the weekly average of the total offertory for the year we planned (budget). For example, \$1.32 million divided by 52 weeks = \$25,384/week). The cumulative short/over figure uses this averaged offertory total, but does give us a fairly accurate picture of how we’re doing over the course of the year. Typically, we see an increase in giving at Christmas and Easter, which impacts the

short/over. Our budget is a plan, a plan first developed in January of each year, and is constantly revised as income and expenses fluctuate over the year. For example, an unforeseen repair may have to be done, and we revise the budget, taking planned spending from one category and moving funds in the budget to cover the repair. The finance council, pastor, department heads, and business manager constantly watch the budget. But, understand that the budget is a plan: What funds do we expect to receive? And where do we plan to spend those funds? As a plan, it is made for each fiscal year. The deficit reported in the bulletin (or surplus) pertains to this budget plan for this fiscal year. As such, the plan expires at the end of our fiscal year (June 30), and there is no carry forward of any of these planned amounts.

This is different than cash flow, which is another measurement we watch very closely. Just like at home, you can't spend money you don't have. Even if you planned this year to purchase that new washing machine, if your checking account does not allow it, you can't purchase. If our cash flow (income/expenses) does not allow a planned purchase, repair, conference, etc., then that planned expenditure cannot happen.

The diocese does not "cover" our shortages. In fact, the only significant source of income the diocese has is from parishes.

13. Are we moving forward with expansion? If so, why are we moving forward with expansion when attendance and funding has declined and is still declining?

While "expansion" is not defined specifically in this question, we assume this pertains to the building of a new church. When we built the current facility in 1992, the space we currently use for "church" was temporary, and we were to build the permanent church building in that area currently used as a soccer field, or for carnival rides during the festival. As Boone County continued to grow, we felt the pressure to build. A decision was made, however, that the expansion of the school was a higher priority, and in 1999 the school building addition was done. The school continued to grow, and we purchased used "trailers" which we continue to use for classrooms today.

We are required to do a physical count of Mass participants every October (every parish does this). Those counts show a continued growth in our Mass attendance through 2009. It was in 2009 that we were over, at, or near capacity for seating at every Sunday Mass. Fr. Comer, pastor at the time, initiated planning for the new church building in order to accommodate our growth. Bishop Foys appointed the "Boone County Task Force" to study the issues, and the question if Boone County would be better served by the establishment of a new parish in the Hebron area. The task force completed their exhaustive work, and recommended to the diocese that IHM be allowed to continue growth, which would require the larger church building. Bishop Foys then instituted the Diocese-wide census project, saying he would make his decision about IHM's future expansion after the census was completed. To our knowledge, the Bishop has not rendered any decision and, in fact, we have not pushed him to do so. The reason goes back to that October count. Our Sunday Mass attendance continued to decline from the high of 2009 to our present low in 2015. While we were at or above 100% church capacity (i.e., standing room only), that is no longer the case as we are now averaging about 45% capacity across all Masses (with 10:45 at 71% full). By the measure of Mass attendance, we can no longer justify the building of a new church worship space. Also,

the Parish Survey done in 2014 asked about financing large projects, and the vast majority of respondents stated they would not support a capital campaign.

So, no, we are not considering expansion of our main facilities at this time. There is, however, a great need for storage space. For this reason, the Knights of Columbus and the IHM Boonedockers are studying the feasibility of building a new storage building. This would be paid for entirely by the Knights and Boonedockers, and their generosity will enable some additional parish storage space. It is an opportune time to look at this, as they are working with the Boone County engineer to take advantage of the new Veterans Way extension slated to begin in 2016.

14. Is our school eligible to receive help from the diocese? I often see stories about this in the Messenger.

Since 1997, the Alliance for Catholic Urban Education (ACUE) has been working with the urban community to ensure that our children within the inner-city areas of our diocese continue to have access to a Catholic education. IHM School is not an urban inner-city school, and therefore not a part of ACUE. We do, however, participate in the annual mission appeal to help support our ACUE schools.

15. Is it true we borrowed \$100,000 from the diocese in the last two years? Is it necessary to have three priests in our parish? Ideas on cutting corners on some classes – I would like to expand on this.

Yes, we did borrow \$100,000 from the Diocese based on the recommendation of the IHM Finance Council. This was done to ensure that we could maintain a positive cash position in our general account to cover fixed costs in light of our decreasing revenue trend. We must ensure sufficient cash on hand to cover payroll and normal operating expenses. In the past, the Diocese would pay our payroll every two weeks and bill us for those costs which gave us an extra few days or even a week to reimburse the Diocese for that expense. The Diocese moved to a new payroll system in 2013, and we must now pay all payroll expenses two days prior to each pay date. These funds are automatically withdrawn from our General Account, meaning that we must maintain sufficient funds in the account to cover those payroll costs (Averaging \$100,000 per pay date). Borrowing the money from the Diocese gave us the cash cushion we needed to ensure we could meet these financial obligations each month. We have paid back \$33,333.00 thus far. Our next payment is due in July, 2016 which is next fiscal year.

The decision to place certain priests in certain parishes is ultimately that of Bishop Foys. The pastor, on his own, cannot simply decide when another priest comes or leaves. More to the point, priests are not expensive. A priest is paid \$20,000.00 annually, plus benefits. The amount of work that our priests do for that amount of money makes them the most cost-effective personnel on staff, to say nothing of their spiritual value. It is also my hope as pastor that most of us are glad about the fact that IHM has been assigned three priests. Almost no other parish in the Diocese has this advantage.

As for the reduction in the number of classes that has been discussed, please note that no decisions have been made at this time. We did communicate that going down from three classes in the lower grades (1-3) to two may be an option for the next school year

because of declining enrollment in those grades. We want to reiterate, though, that if this happens, it will not sacrifice the quality of education. Our teachers are trained to teach at a ratio of 30:1 and our classes would be at that level or less even were a reduction in the number of classes to occur.

16. To my knowledge, we haven't heard anything about the actual needs of the parish (plants, grounds, etc.) We need a capital campaign.

The finance council, maintenance committee and parish council monitors our infrastructure/building maintenance issues closely and are trying to determine the best approach to our impending capital expenses. We have conducted an engineering study on our HVAC system needs, received estimates on repairing/replacing the roofs on the church/school and rectory, resurfacing the lower parking lot, additional security cameras and new door lock mechanisms.

We have also looked into replacing the marquis on Burlington Pike to enhance our ability to inform the public of all of the wonderful activities and events that the IHM community has to offer. As you can imagine these projects will be expensive (since our building and facility is now 23 years old). The question at this point is do we have one big capital campaign to fix everything or do we prioritize the needs and do each project one at a time? In other words, do we have one large capital campaign or the number of smaller campaigns that will extend the projects over a longer time period? A capital campaign to pay for the needed repairs/replacements at IHM may be the best answer, but in the recently completed Parish Survey, the majority of respondents said they would not support a capital campaign, but rather increase their weekly offertory giving.

IHM School

17. Specifically, what is the plan to bring back foreign languages and music? What is the timeframe to do this?

The simplest answer is as soon as possible. As you may have heard, we have recently opened accounts for specialized donations to raise funds to bring back the specials sooner. In the meantime, we are continuing to use our parish resources to help develop a budget that will support these specials for the long-term.

We understand that this isn't a specific answer and we regret that, but it is the best we can do at this time. We will reiterate that the parish's financial situation is directly tied to the school budget. When our status improves, the school's budget should increase. In the meantime, though, we are undergoing a process of "right-sizing" and identifying ways to do more with less. Our students get a fantastic education at IHM. That has not changed and will not.

18. Will a half-day option for kindergarten be coming back? Right now, I have chosen a public school half-day program and delay attendance at IHM until first-grade.

The decision to eliminate the half-day Kindergarten was made after exhaustive research and surveys of parents. At this time, we will continue to offer two full-day Kindergarten programs to meet the needs of most families.

19. I've heard that there's a possibility that you may reduce the number of classes in first- and second-grade from three down to two. What will the student/teacher ratio be if that happens?

Class size is predicated upon enrollment. The maximum student/teacher ratio in any class would be 30:1. Currently our numbers would indicate a ratio of 25:1. Any proposal to cut classes at any grade levels is dependent upon school enrollment and parish giving.

20. Why should we pay as much for a Catholic school with no Spanish or music as other families pay at schools where those programs are included? We can find Catholicity at other Catholic schools along with those missing programs.

As we have said, we are looking to bring back specials as soon as possible. Please know that we understand this concern. Most of us on parish council and the EAB are parents of kids enrolled in our great school. The one thing that we might ask you to consider is this: IHM School has one benefit that no other Catholic school has: it's *your* school. If we want to have the parish that we want, including the parish school that we want, the answer might not to be 'shop around.' The answer for many of us is to invest and be involved in our own parish. We are so heartened by the number of parents who are volunteering on our EAB to take ownership and be committed to IHM and our school. We also so proud of all of the parents at our school who care, volunteer and are involved in their children's education. This question reflects that deep level of caring. We just want to share our perspective on this. We don't look at it as paying for a service, but rather investing in a legacy. We are committed to maintaining—and growing—IHM's great legacy of quality, Catholic education.

The reality is that our school was the last, or nearly the last, to have to cut the instructional aides from the classroom. Perhaps we held on too long as other schools—public and private—haven't had them for many, many years. But we are having to readjust to realities of our present financial situation—in the same ways that families do when their income decreases or prices for goods rise. The families make some sacrifices, but the family unit doesn't suffer. In many ways, the opportunities to grow stronger, do things better, smarter and in a more effective way, arise. That's what we're doing and our hope for the future is bright and as strong as ever.

21. Are we planning expand the GIFT program at IHM?

We plan to continue to promote it, yes. Our Growing in Faith Together program encourages our families to promote IHM to those who may be searching for a Catholic school and rewards them with a \$500 tuition credit after a new family completes their first year.

22. We have heard there are cuts coming, specifically to grades 1, 2, & 3. Are any alternate plans being looked at to reduce expenses or is it the only option?

Yes, we are looking at options. One has been the formation of a “Grant Committee”. They search for, and make application for various grants. Several opportunities have already realized grants for the school. We obtained the National Farm to School Grant which has helped off-set field trip expenses and has supplemented the art program and STEM learning. We have also been able to obtain Art Reach funding to supplement the costs for a performance by The Children’s Theatre of Cincinnati. In addition, multiple teachers have been able to obtain grants to have or maintain pets in the classroom.

On the parish side, we have initiated an exhaustive review of all contracts for service. For example, our new Technology Committee chaired by Eric Ritchie, has reviewed our parish/school IT Support contract, and identified some significant areas for savings. For example, we were paying \$500 each month for IT training, which we were not taking advantage of and we canceled that part of the IT Support contract. We also have changed the way software licenses are purchased and in January, 2016, we took steps that will result in at least a \$711 savings each month. Further, this summer, we changed our photocopy contract and were able to obtain new machines with greater capacity for less cost.

We will continue to review all contracts in order to identify areas for potential savings. To do so, we need parishioners with expertise to step forward to help. Parishioner Eric Ritchie is a computer professional, and is making a significant contribution to the IT Support arena. Another parishioner, an HVAC expert, is currently reviewing our Heating/Air Conditioning Maintenance contract to identify other potential areas we might realize some savings. If you have an area of expertise and would like to help us, please let us know.

23. Are we going to know if additional teachers will be cut BEFORE re-registration is due?

No, and we truly wish it weren’t the case. Our staffing is dependent upon the numbers of students registered for the school year and we can’t know that until the registration process is complete. We can, however, make educated guesses and explain what would happen in different scenarios. This is what we have tried to do with this Parish Town Hall Meeting by explaining that, unless new resources are shared or discovered, we may reduce the number of classes in those grades. This decision has not yet been made, however. It is important to remember that adjustments in our staff will not affect the quality of the education received at IHM.

24. As I see it a school of our size does not need an assistant principal, at least until it can get back firmly on its two feet. Cutting sections of grades 1 – 3 is a lot more detrimental to quality education than cutting an office staff member.

Thank you for sharing your feedback. At this time, we have determined that the position of vice principal is a significant benefit for our school. There are many areas of responsibility of the vice principal that are not well-known and we’ve listed them below.

Also, our teachers are prepared to teach 30 students in a single classroom. If we have to adjust classroom numbers, that does not equate to adjusting the quality of teaching within those classrooms. Students will continue to receive an exceptional education.

Vice Principal Responsibilities:

- Master Scheduling
- Alternative Learning Plan coordinator
- Liaison with Boone County, teacher certification monthly meetings (ARC), Title 1, documentation, scheduling of services, notification to parents
- Inclusion Committee Representative
- Duke Tip talent search coordinator
- Student Services—conferences, documentation, follow-up, attend conferences at parent or teacher requests
- 8th grade leadership team
- Awards ceremony at end of the year
- Assuming principal responsibilities when principal is not available
- Student growth opportunities/discipline
- Extra programming coordination (Art Reach, Math Club)
- Kentucky Teacher Internship Program (KTIP)
- New teacher training, professional development, teacher meetings
- ITBS scheduling of services and student testing
- Observations
- Assistance to school counselor

Miscellaneous

25. Our next door neighbors are a very nice family with three children who are from India and Bangladesh and are Muslim. They are looking to send their children to a Catholic school and they have mentioned Villa Madonna, IHM, and MQH. How would a non-Christian family be viewed at IHM?

As pastor, I can certainly say that IHM would welcome students of an Islamic background as indeed we welcome all to our school. My only desire would be for your neighbors to understand that IHM School is a school that is very proud of our Catholic faith: we practice it, we teach it, and we promote it. We would not be able to make exceptions in our religious programs or school activities to accommodate those of other faiths. While not pressuring anyone to become Catholic unless they want to be, we would still require all students to participate (to the extent appropriate) in Mass, Rosary, Stations of the Cross, etc. We would be teaching the Catholic faith as that faith which contains the fullness of truth, Jesus Christ as true God and true man, and the Catholic Church as the one, true Church.

If your neighbors have no problem with exposing their children to Catholicism, then I can assure you that they would be welcome here. In fact, I think it would be a beautiful opportunity for we Catholics to get a better idea of the teachings of Islam, as well as for them to get a better idea of the teachings of Catholicism. In this time of tension, fear, and

even hatred on the world stage between Christians and Muslims, anything that we can do to live and learn together is a positive thing in my opinion. So, as far as I'm concerned, you should totally encourage them!

26. We need a resource officer for security during school mass times especially. Our children are exposed with the parish being connected to the school. What is being done to step up security to make sure our children & staff are safe? How often do they practice lock down drills?

Safety of our students and staff is a high priority. We recently organized a Safety Committee that reviewed our procedures and facility and made practical recommendations for improvement. Many of these were adopted but will not necessarily be made public. Some recommendations, such as a property-wide security fence are simply cost prohibitive.

We conduct lock down drills at a minimum of two times per year, up to 10 fire drills per year, one tornado and earthquake drill per year and we follow local and state reporting requirements. We participate in all local and state health inspections as mandated by state regulations. Our assigned Boone County Sheriff's School Resource Officer, Deputy Kerry Currey, is a regular presence and great help in our school. We have periodic walk-through visits from the Boone County Sheriff's Department and we evaluate our safety protocols annually. All this being said, there remain security concerns and risks, such as recess on an open playground and Mass in Church. During these times, staff monitors are assigned to help provide a safe environment for all. We are considering adding to our current security camera system, as well as deploying a facility wide computer controlled locking security system due to the proliferation of keys throughout the parish.

27. Bring back coffee & donuts after mass.

As the question/comment indicates, we used to do this. Various organizations of the parish sponsored coffee and donuts one Sunday a month in Britt Hall. We discontinued this practice for several reasons. First, these were poorly attended. Second, our Mass schedule creates some logistical issues, especially with parking. And third, it was expensive for the organizations for what was thought to be a poor return on investment given the attendance. We have discussed the need for such an activity, as we want to find ways to increase parish ownership, and a sense of community in our large parish. We have discussed some initiatives, such as bring back the quarterly "new parishioner" welcoming breakfast. If there is anyone reading who wants to help coordinate such an effort, please do let us know!

28. Maybe we can do fund raising like the public schools do all the time like getting people renew their magazines, or make arrangements with companies like Amazon where we get something like 5% of what people spend. This way, we are targeting everyone, not just our parishioners. I get this all the time from my grandchildren, nephews and nieces.

We limit our school's major fundraising to twice a year (Walk-a-Thon and Spring Fling) so that all families may fully participate (the idea that two large fund raisers may result in

more success than many small fund raisers). However, we do participate in local restaurant fund raising opportunities as well as Kroger Plus cards, Target, Campbell's, Box Tops and Amazon programs creating additional revenue for our school. PTO will be having a first time Braided Bread Sale this spring. The questioner raises the concern, however, that we need to do a better job of making these opportunities more known throughout the parish and we agree. We are working on that.

Final note:

I want to personally thank everyone who was involved in our Parish Town Hall in December—for those who attended and those who had a role in answering questions from our parishioners, parents and community members. Thank you, too, to all of you who are taking the time to review and read our Question & Answer recap. Your engagement in our parish and our school matters to us and is critical to our future success.

We have such a wonderful, dynamic and Spirit-filled parish. It is an honor to be your pastor. Thank you for your commitment to growing IHM and to making this place one where everyone feels welcome and cherished.

~ Fr. Rottman