



Want to meet the Pope or swim with Phelps?

St. Cecilia fundraiser to auction off trip, swimming lessons and more

By Bob Zientara

Parishioners at St. Cecilia Catholic Church have been running the Gala, an annual fundraiser, for three years, but the results they produced in 2008 far surpassed what they'd earned the first two tries.

In 2008, organizers hired Chicago auctioneer David Goodman, whose company specializes in nonprofit fundraisers. The event netted more than \$225,000 (out of a total income of about \$230,000 to \$235,000) for the school's endowment program and to purchase interactive "electronic white boards" for its classrooms.

Goodman's fees are part of the total income, parishioner and event organizer Darryl Bennett said.

But just as important, he said, are the contacts Goodman has in the auction industry and the advice he gives to event organizers.

The 2009 Gala will be Saturday, Feb. 7, and Goodman and event organizers are hoping for similar results to last year's fundraiser.

This year's live auction items include a trip to Rome and an audience with Pope Benedict XVI at his summer home at Castel Gandolfo, and swimming lessons from Olympic champion Michael Phelps.

Goodman, who's in his 20th year as a nonprofit auctioneer, said he has helped raise over \$75 million for nonprofits during his career.