



Saint Joseph Catholic Church

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Dear St. Joseph Parishioner,

A little over a year ago, I came to St. Joseph's and as part of my transitions' I held a number of listening sessions. The number one thing that I heard was a desire from all of you for more transparency when it comes to the financial matters of the parish. I would therefore like to take a moment to share with you some of the challenges that currently confront our parish. Before, I do this; I want to make it clear that I know that nothing can kill a parish faster than false rumors and fake news. Therefore I ask you to trust me and I want you to reject everything else unless you hear it from me or see it written in my bulletin column.

As I arrived at Saint Joseph parish I adopted the following quote from St. John Paul II as my motto. "Let us remember the past with gratitude, live in the present with enthusiasm, and look forward to the future with confidence." I therefore want to begin by expressing my gratitude to God for allowing me to be a part of the St. Joseph Parish Family. I am extremely grateful to be a pastor of a parish with an outstanding and vibrant Catholic School. The faculty and staff at St. Joseph are excellent educators and are willing to make any sacrifice necessary to make sure our school children succeed. Our parish really does have an incredible Catholic School that is currently promoting excellence in academics and encouraging the spiritual growth of its students. The teachers and staff do a great job of assisting parents in the formation of their children in mind, heart, and spirit. Alongside having an amazing school, our parish is blessed with a dynamic PSR program and other great formation programs for our children. I have enjoyed spending time with our special junior high PSR, called "The Way". I also look forward to and love celebrating PSR family Masses. I also appreciate how the parish comes alive each summer when Vacation Bible School is in session. Adult Education programs of the parish are truly extraordinary. My heart overflows with joy as I see the real desire in the hearts of the adults of the parish to grow closer to God through our ACTS programs, Bible Studies, and the large number of small faith sharing groups. Our parish liturgies at St. Joseph are amazing moments of grace and in a special way we are blessed by all the different groups and individuals who lead us in music each week as we gather around the Lord's Table. Finally the love the people of this parish have for the poor is awe inspiring. Our parish outreach programs demonstrate to the world that we see Christ in each human person.

Remember the past with gratitude gives me the courage to face the following issues with enthusiasm and hope: the decline in Mass attendance, drop in attendance in our fulltime school, and a decrease in Sunday giving. Our parish continues to be vibrant and active despite the many problems taking place in our world and in the larger Catholic Church. At the same though, we have to admit to ourselves that we as a parish have seen a significant drop in Mass attendance, Baptisms, and Sunday offerings. At one time St. Joseph was a standing room only Church. Looking at the Mass counts that we turn into the Archdiocese for the last three years I can say that, we did not have one Sunday Mass that was attended by more than 400 people. The Archdiocese statistics show that we should have a parish school of kindergarten through eighth grade of 225 students and our current student enrollment is only 149 students. This is not about blaming the families of our parish who have over the years chosen to send their children to public schools for there are many valid reasons a family might choose to send their child to one of the public schools in the area. I believe this issue speaks louder to a spirit of complacency within our parish and the larger Catholic Church in regards to marketing our great Catholic School. This is a particularly sad statistic for me because; I know just how truly great our Catholic school is. Finally, for many reasons, we have seen a drop in our Sunday offertory which is leaving us with a projected shortfall of \$200,000 for this fiscal year. This is particularly alarming because our parish has had to dip into our sparse savings once already in my time here in order to repair our parish gym roof which could no longer be delayed. And sooner rather than later we will have to replace our air conditioner and heater unit which is over 40 years old. The estimate cost for this repair is \$500,000 because we will have to also make repairs to the tunnel that connects the unit to the building and replace all our air handler units. In addition our parish is still dealing with our debt to the Archdiocese of over \$600,000 for the building of the parish center.

So now what? How do we –harken back to the words of Saint John Paul II and "move forward into the future with confidence?" As I prayed about how best to share this information with everyone someone shared with me the fact that

“every miracle in the Bible started off as a problem.” I think we are ready for a miracle here at St. Joseph. With this I do not mean there is no hope and we should close up shop and go home but rather we need to remind ourselves of three important things about miracles. The first is a miracle is not something magical for every miracle that God performed in the Bible required people to work God to bring it about. Someone had to give Jesus the five loaves and two fish before he could feed the five thousand. The cripple man had to trust his friends to lower him through the roof before he could be cured and walk again. Jesus even borrowed the Upper Room where He gave us the Eucharist and the tomb from which He rose. \$200,000 dollars may sound like a lot to many of us, but the reality is, that for us to avoid going into debt at the end of this financial year, we simply need everyone to increase the current amount they give by one to two percent. I invite you to please pray about increasing your donation to the parish one to two percent more this year. If you can give more, please do. Please then let us know at the parish what we can expect you to give. Remember God is never out done in generosity and the money that you give helps us keep St. Joseph a vibrant parish. The second is that miracles require trust in God. In this moment of financial crisis we cannot panic. We need to trust in God. We are striving to be better stewards of the parish money by reducing spending; our school shows great promise of rebounding with larger numbers of students in our lower grades and our new early childhood learning center has over fifty children in it. The third and final thing we must remember when it comes to miracles is that with God all things are possible. Starting in December Deacon Dan, will be leading our parish in an effort to develop a culture of stewardship in our parish that will help St. Joseph grow well into the future.

Let us therefore as a community remember the past with gratitude by... **1.** Realizing that St. Joseph parish has seen its times of crisis before and our ancestors succeeded to build up this wonderful parish. **2.** By knowing that spending the time blaming the past or talking about the way things were will not help the future or even the present. **3.** Finally in last week’s bulletin you and in the back of Church will find some note cards labeled “Gratitude”. I invited everyone to write down one or two things that you really love about St. Joseph’s parish and drop those papers in the collection basket in the weeks to come.

Let us live in the present with Enthusiasm by... **1.** Our parish, PSR program, and school will have another great year filled with many activities. Please make every effort to participate in these events. **2.** Come and join us each week for Mass on Sunday. Better yet, invite someone to come with you. If they had issues in the past or are struggling, know that Fr. Tim, Fr. Ricardo, and myself are willing to listen and our parish council and parish staff desire to assist you as well. **3.** Knowing that the challenges we face are both complicated and filled with emotional energy I will be hosting a new series of listening sessions. In regards to these listening sessions, I ask you to remember three things. First remember back to when I held listening sessions this spring in regards to the possibility of building a new rectory. I learned from those sessions. I listened and learned that now was not a good time to build a new rectory and I am glad I listened. The second thing, I want you to know that at these listening sessions, I would like to hear from all of you not only how to address our current financial challenges but also the ideas that you have in regard to how St. Joseph Parish can grow. Last month, I attended a workshop called the Amazing Parish and at the conference I was reminded that now can be an exciting time to be a Catholic and that it is good to try to do things in a new way. Just recently one parishioner started a play-date program for preschoolers and another parishioner is starting a young adult Bible study.

Let us give thanks to those who have come before us by addressing the present with enthusiasm and not panic. As they faced the challenges of the past 150 plus years, we now accept the challenges that God has seen fit to give us. Let us work together. Let us therefore look forward to the future together with confidence... **1.** By having trust in God and the great things that He is doing in this parish by prayerfully considering increasing your Sunday offering knowing that any increase is appreciated but an increase of 2% would be extremely appreciative. Larger donations will also not be turned down. **2.** By having faith in each other, I have faith in all of you and I ask you to have faith and trust in me. Please do not give into the temptation of gossiping and spreading fake news. **3.** Finally by letting people know what a great and amazing parish we at St. Joseph have. Invite a friend, a neighbor, a co-worker.

God bless,

Rev. Thomas M. Pastorius
Father Thomas M. Pastorius
Pastor of St. Joseph Parish