

**The Church of St. Mark 2023 Annual Report**

# **CAN YOU IMAGINE?!**

**A CATHOLIC VISION FOR MERRIAM PARK (AND BEYOND)**







# FROM THE PASTOR

*Fr. David Hottinger, P.E.S.*

READ TIME: 3½ MINUTES

***“Each Catholic parish is a miniature of the universal Church. Each Catholic parish, therefore, is charged with this task of Gospel-proclamation (evangelizing) to every creature within the slice of God’s green earth bounded by its geographical limits. When we say at St. Mark’s that our mission is to live and share Christ’s call to holiness, this is what we are professing.”***

THE GOSPEL PENNED BY OUR PATRON ends with this command from the Risen Savior: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.” And if motivation were lacking for such an undertaking, He gives the reason: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk 16:15-16).

Proclaim the Gospel to every creature? Squirrels and stones included? Evidently Jesus is only looking for a response from the human recipients of the Message. But it’s as though the whole of creation is to be caught up in the proclamation and the response. Indeed, “all things in heaven and on earth were created in Him and through Him and for Him” (cf. Col 1:16). The greatest purpose to which anything--angel, animal, vegetable, or mineral--can be put is the worship of God. And only as a part of the

Gospel “economy”--the work of proclaiming, believing, living, and sharing Jesus Christ--is God worshiped “in spirit and in truth.” (Jn 4:24). So yes: proclaim the Gospel to every creature, with every creature, and with every creature praise the Lord!

Each Catholic parish is a miniature of the universal Church. Each Catholic parish, therefore, is charged with this task of Gospel-proclamation (evangelizing) to every creature within the slice of God’s green earth bounded by its geographical limits. When we say at St. Mark’s that our mission is to live and share Christ’s call to holiness, this is what we are professing. That we are called to respond to the Gospel invitation ourselves (by becoming holy, just as He is Holy), and inviting every creature we encounter to be caught up into the Kingdom of God, in which God is glorified, man is fully alive, and all creation sings God’s praise.

I feel most fortunate to have been made pastor at the Church of Saint Mark. God has blessed this parish in so many ways. As pastor, I am most appreciative of the fact that the community I have been asked to shepherd is outstanding in its unity: in our Catholic faith, in our love for the Lord and one another, and in our commitment to what matters most.



As pastor, I am convinced that we are called to share this great blessing--which is nothing less than a communion of eternal life with the Triune God and with His Church--with others. Like a ship upon which many have gathered to find refuge in a salty sea, it's time for the ship to unfurl its sails and start to move. It's time to evangelize the neighborhood and become saints in the process!

And so, like a ship whose crew spring into action, there is much to do! We've got to get ready to set sail. We cannot be content to simply maintain what we have, or do the same (good) things we do every year. We must be good stewards of the talents received; we must continue to grow. We must get to work.

Fulfilling our evangelical mission will require growth in three principle areas. **First**, we must strengthen our communion even more, with the Lord and with one another. The Synod call to invest in small groups (something we as a parish had already determined to do in the 2021 Strategic Plan) will be a big part of that. **Second**, we must invest in our aging facilities in order to furnish our parish with adequate spaces to cultivate community, receive in hospitality our neighbors, and host events and activities in which the Gospel can truly be proclaimed "to every creature." **Third**, we must be intentional (and creative) in reaching out to our unchurched or fallen away neighbors to give them opportunities to encounter Jesus through His Church.

With the help of parish leadership and the input of many, we have generated a long "to-do" list for the

coming years (to which the Holy Spirit is sure to add). No doubt it is ambitious and contains many unanswered questions: what to do with the lower church? How will our parents educate the many little ones with which we have been blessed? How shall we be good stewards of the school building? How shall we pay for all the facility fixes and improvements that are so pressing? What gifts and charisms has the Holy Spirit endowed our community with for the work of evangelization? I look forward to engaging all of you in discovering the answers to those questions and putting hand to the plow in our efforts to respond to what God is asking of us. This much is certain: we will succeed as a parish in the measure our parishioners 1) seek and obtain God's blessing through incessant, discerning, and humble prayer, and 2) devote our time, talent, and treasure to this economy of salvation at work here at the Church of Saint Mark. And so good and faithful stewards, "Rise up! Let us start to build!" (Neh 2:18).

#### EVANGELICAL MISSION GOALS



**Build up** communion



**Rebuild** our facilities



**Bring in** our neighbors







**CAN YOU IMAGINE:**  
Merriam Park transformed  
into the Kingdom of God  
by a parish of saints?

ABIDE IN  
MY LOVE  
JESUS IN MY  
SACRED  
HEART

FAST STATS

# FROM THE CHURCH OF ST MARK

*From July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023*



**~130**  
committed adorers



**~85**  
Bible Study participants



**~\$25.5k**  
raised by the CCW



**1,895**  
lbs of food donated



**155**  
meals prepared for  
parish families via  
the Moms Group



**7,956**  
donuts served



**1**  
Larry Leif

Marriages **(9)** | First Communions **(23)** | Baptisms **(35)** | Entered the Church **(6)**  
Confirmations **(17)** | Funerals **(8)** | New registered families/parishioners **(35)**

*CAN YOU IMAGINE if next year we x10ed these numbers?!  
(except funerals!)*





# FROM IGNITE YOUTH MINISTRY

READ TIME: ~1½ MINUTES

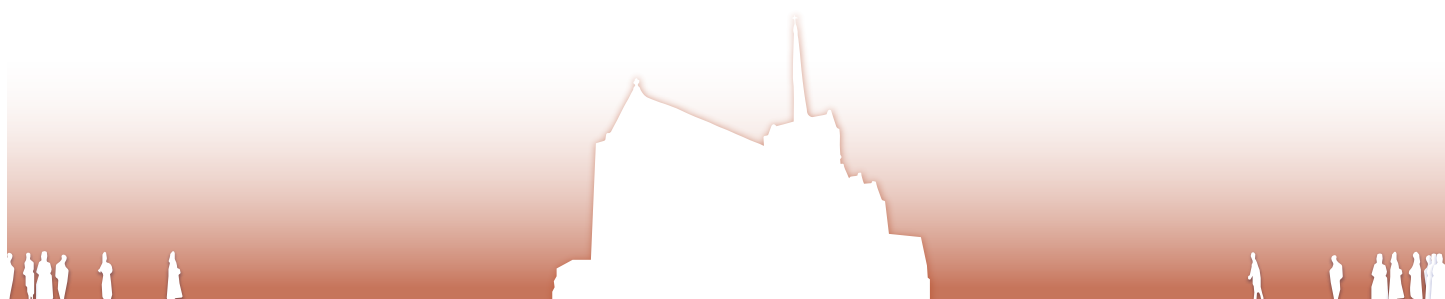
*"The great new project of the year is involving more parishioners and parents in the organization and operation of Ignite and Ignite events."*

FALL OF 2022 UNTO NOW HAS BEEN A YEAR OF GROWTH and learning for Ignite Youth Ministries - of hearing and answering desires that have been made known to us from the youth themselves. At the end of the summer of 2022, we met with some of our high school parishioners to hear their feedback about, and desires for, Ignite. We discovered a desire to go deeper! And so, we started a new pattern of regular, biweekly youth group meetings for highschoolers, whereas Ignite previously had been only monthly or bimonthly events. We not only have reached our own youth of St Mark's, but our youth have brought friends, from outside the parish, with the same desires to go in a deeper relationship with the Sacred Heart of Jesus and stronger prayer life.

To further the excitement, Ignite introduced two new events to its arsenal: swing dances and the now-famous (and notorious) Nerf Night! Both have been met with great acclaim: the first youth group swing dance in the Fall of '22 drew 30+ youth, growing to 50+ in the Spring Swing! The first Youth Group Nerf Night, for 9-12th grade, drew over 80 would-be warriors, and the 6th-8th graders also got

their own turn just this last August. These events both strengthen camaraderie and draw in new youths from beyond the parish to be introduced to Ignite, and we pray they continue to do so in the coming year.

Finally, we were blessed last October with a very successful Ignite "Hearts on Fire" retreat, maxing out our population limit at the camp, with 21 high school peer ministers and adult volunteers, and 38 campers, - 40% higher than the previous year of 2021! We hope to continue our growth as a ministry, in what we can offer and how many youth we can reach. The great new project of the year is involving more parishioners and parents in the organization and operation of Ignite and Ignite events. This will provide our youth ministry with greater stability, anchor it more firmly as a feature of parish life, and give it a greater continuity - so it can continue to improve, develop, and expand its evangelical outreach in our community, inside and even outside the Church of St Mark.









# FROM THE PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR

*Amie Iwaszkowicz*

READ TIME: ~1 MINUTE

**ST. MARK'S PRESCHOOL IS THRIVING!** Our staff is truly grateful for the opportunity to spend time with the three and four year olds that grace our space each day. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is an integral part of our curriculum and our students love the opportunity to experience CGS each week. Last year we had 50 three and four year old children participating in CGS! In the afternoon, we're offering a Virtues program. During this time, a Saint of the month is taught in creative and engaging ways. Fr. Joe and Sister Maddie came into our classrooms to connect faith to our little ones, every Wednesday. Now Fr. Patrick and Sr. Maddy have stepped in to fill their shoes. Our Preschool events have consistently drawn close to 100 attendees! This past April, we hosted a group Baptism for the Preschool. Five preschoolers and their siblings were baptized by Fr. Joe. Furthermore, 21 preschool graduates walked the stage, in the spring of 2023. This is the highest number of students to don a cap and gown in completion of our program! Our students learn about God and Jesus and faith daily through prayer, stories, songs, and more. Our faith in Christ is woven into all that we do and teach. If you are interested in scheduling a tour, please reach out! [aiwaszkowicz@onestrongfamily.org](mailto:aiwaszkowicz@onestrongfamily.org)



# FROM THE DIRECTOR OF MISSION

*Kristen Grant*

READ TIME: 2½ MINUTES

*"... the power of God is not hindered by any of those limitations, and he invites us to ask and to imagine – not promising to give us exactly what we ask and dream but rather 'abundantly far more.'"*

IN HIS LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS, Saint Paul reminds the Ephesian Christians that the God who is working in them and through them "is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine." We sometimes hold back from bold imagination because we doubt our own meager resources, our fallible strategies, or our imperfect willingness to serve that vision. But the power of God is not hindered by any of those limitations, and he invites us to ask and to imagine – not promising to give us exactly what we ask and dream but rather "abundantly far more."

At St. Mark's, we have been imagining the future that God might have in store for us in this new missionary age. One way that we did that was in setting some three-year mission goals for ourselves, what we call the Pastoral Plan for Ministry. I want to share a little with you about how God has responded to our "askings and imaginings" in the past year:

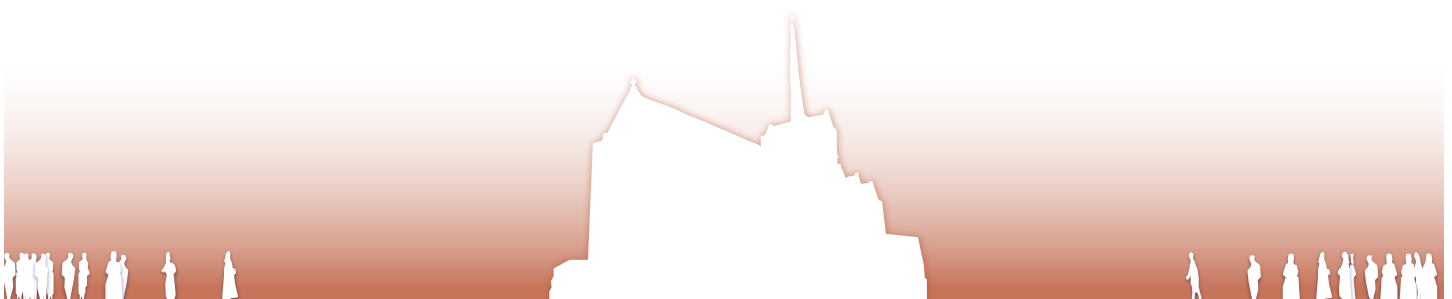
– **Supper at Emmaus:** This monthly potluck dinner to build up our One Strong Family United in Christ just began its second year of breaking bread together before the Emmaus Holy Hour. Come check it out every third Thursday of the month at 5:30 in Carolyn Hall.

– **Expanding Small Group Ministry:** This parish goal was echoed in the call of the Holy Spirit emerging from the Archdiocesan Synod to establish small groups in every parish in the Archdiocese. Small Group Leader Formation is ongoing this fall, with new small groups to begin in Lent 2024.

– **MercyWorks:** Debuting next month! A small team of dedicated parishioners has been praying, imagining and planning for how the Works of Mercy can be renewed as a vibrant aspect of our parish life and discipleship at St. Mark's. Keep your eyes out for the invitation to meet Christ in service to the least of these.

And more to come:

– **Focus on Evangelization:** The Archbishop has directed that every parish form a new council, like the Pastoral Council and the Finance Council, to be focused on the fundamental mission of the Church to





make disciples. The newly-formed Synod Evangelization Team (SET) is focused this year on the expansion of Small Group Ministry in the parish (using a small group model with a focus on evangelization), but in years to come will continue to seek ways to equip all parishioners to share the gospel in our words and deeds.

– **Father's Ministry:** We hope that at least one of our new small groups will be focused on building community among fathers, and we will continue to explore other ways of supporting fathers in their unique vocation within the family.

– **Ministry to College Students:** With the University of St. Thomas within our parish boundaries, and many UST students, staff, and faculty connected to St. Mark's, we want to seek ways to minister more intentionally to the students who have been drawn into our parish family.

Please imagine and pray about your place in the vision that God has for St. Mark's. And “to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20-21)

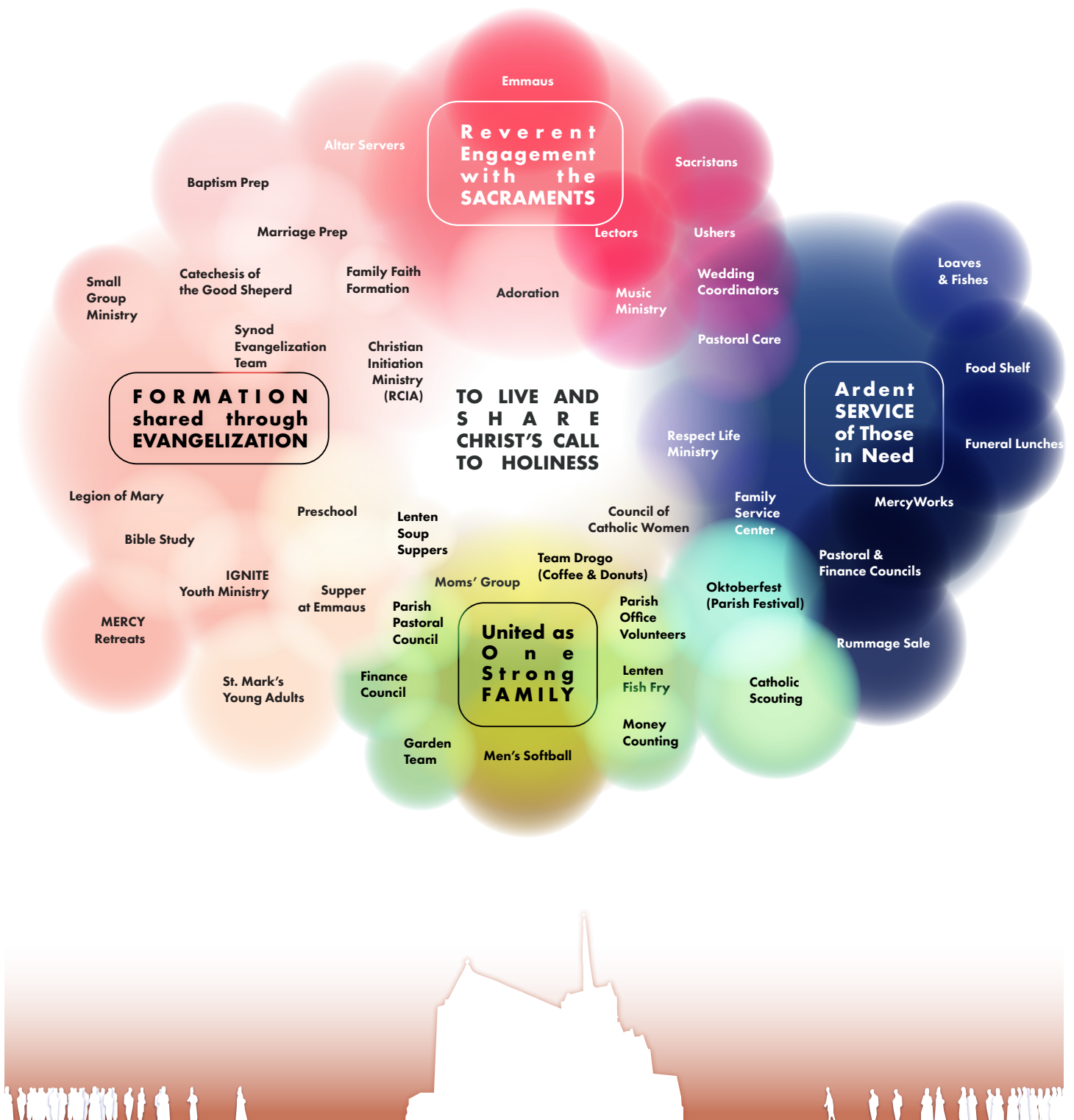






# MISSION & MINISTRY MAP

*Church of Saint Mark*





# Mission Statement

*Our mission is to live  
and share Christ's call to holiness*

## Core Values

### ***Sacraments***

We are rooted in a reverent Sacramental life as the primary means for union with Christ.



### ***Family***

We are one strong family united in Christ: young and old, married and single, we are forming lifelong friendships, supporting one another, and spurring one another on toward holiness.



### ***Catholic***

We live our lives in faithful and joyful communion with the Catholic Church and Her rich tradition.



### ***Formation & Evangelization***

We believe that we must form our hearts and minds with the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, and that we are called to share our faith in Christ with others.



### ***Service***

We believe in the ardent practice of Christian charity towards all those in spiritual or material need.



# - 2023 - Parish Financial Report

Our fiscal year runs July 1 to June 30.

	Fiscal Year 2022 Actual	Fiscal Year 2023 Actual	Fiscal Year 2024 Budget
<b>Revenue</b>			
Stewardship/Tithing	\$778,392	\$818,406	\$832,500
Building Rentals	\$163,463	\$195,785	\$194,025
Memorials, Bequests, Endowment	\$28,033	\$42,916	See Cash Flow
Other (Festival, CCW, etc.)	\$111,770	\$128,038	\$113,350
School/Preschool	\$247,310	\$340,639	\$296,189
<b>Total Parish Revenue:</b>	<b>\$1,328,968</b>	<b>\$1,525,783</b>	<b>\$1,388,882</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Personnel (clergy and lay staff)	\$485,353	\$571,967	\$616,277
Programs and Operations	\$473,750	\$441,811	\$436,544
School/Preschool	\$222,326	\$258,169	\$216,662
Building and Grounds	\$247,265	\$295,614	\$327,040 <sup>B</sup>
<b>Total Parish Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,428,694</b>	<b>\$1,567,561</b>	<b>\$1,596,523</b>
<b>Net Operating Loss</b>	<b>-\$99,726</b>	<b>-\$41,778</b>	<b>-\$160,458</b>
<b>Non-Operating Cash Flow</b>			
	Bequest and Endowment		\$373,000 <sup>+</sup>
	Archdiocesan frozen school pension		-\$46,984
	Archdiocese Debt Payment		-\$284,097 <sup>*</sup>
			<b>\$41,919</b>
<b>Total Budget and Cash Flow</b>			<b>-\$118,539</b>

<sup>B</sup> Overall deficit is due to repairs for several active leaks in our buildings

<sup>+</sup> Thanks to the generosity of Mr. William Casey. Includes 73k draw from our endowment

<sup>\*</sup> 244k payment for FY23 will be paid following the sale of the Casey house



# FROM THE BUSINESS MANAGER

Randy Lehnert

READ TIME: 2½ MINUTES

*"I recall the satisfaction and delight that one of my children felt when donating a portion of his yard work income to a charity that he picked on his own."*

## \$1 FOR EVERY YEAR OF JESUS' LIFE?

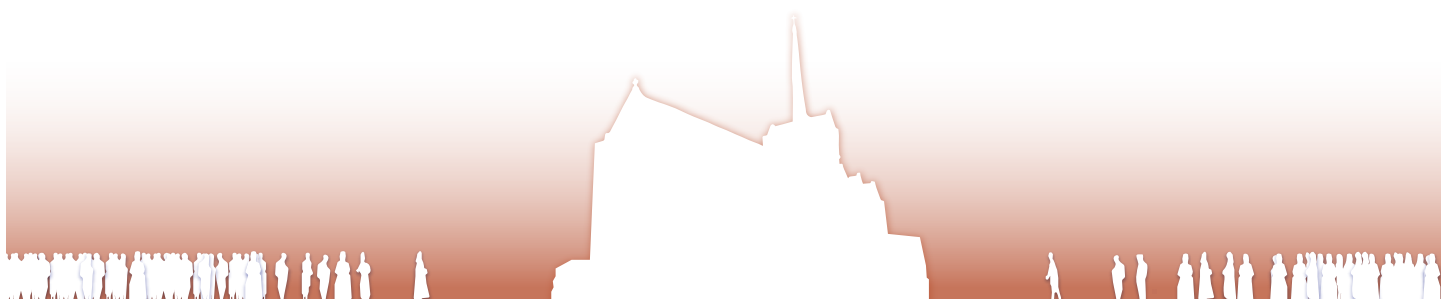
"Hey kids, can you help?" With a smile, you might relate to my experiences as a father of four children. Like yesterday, I recall a child of mine who shunned any notion of being voluntold despite our efforts to impart the maxim of please do your part – you are one of our family! My wife and I also taught the value of tithing to our children as an integral part of the path toward financial freedom. I recall the satisfaction and delight that one of my children felt when donating a portion of his yard work income to a charity that he picked on his own. Is it not true that doing our part brings us all a sense of ownership, pride (the good kind), and indeed freedom that comes from self-integration into our spiritual family?

Saint Paul's words "The love of money is the root of all evils" (1Tim6:10) applies to my job as much as to each parishioner. As I started in March this past

year, I have been immersed intensely in the cash flowing in and out of leaking buildings, vendors, renters, and debts. I often dreamed of a single \$5M donation (the approximate sum of all maintenance and debt reduction) that would solve all our problems. But I keep in mind that our Lord can do this in a single breath. He is in charge! Is not every penny in our accounts purposed for loving and serving the Lord, evangelization and conversion of souls? Where else does our true freedom and joy come from? Not money. Let us not forget this reality!

EXPENSES: As stewards of the parish, however, we cannot ignore the realities behind our budget. Based on what we currently know, our total operating loss will be approximately **\$160,000** over the course of this next year. This depletion is driven by continued buildings and grounds expenses along with additional staffing funds needed to support our growing parish. Below are the largest unplanned projects that fixed our active leaks this year.

CHURCH	PARISH CENTER	SCHOOL ROOF
Roof repair above organ \$17,000	Brick rebuild and tuckpoint \$72,000	NW section replacement \$65,000





INCOME: Thanks to the generous bequeathal of William Casey which includes the planned sale of his house, we have an additional **\$300,000** to our cash position for the upcoming year. The Saint Joseph Business Guild, preschool, Coops, and the Saint Paul Seminary continue to bring in revenue from our building rentals. But we still fall very short.

**This is where you come in!** Suppose *each* parishioner generously provides an extra \$33 dollars per month? Believe it or not, this small increase will pay the budget shortfall for this year. That is just one dollar per day, for each year of our Lord's life! Can you help?

YEAR DEFICIT	PER MONTH	# OF HOUSEHOLDS	AMOUNT PER HOUSEHOLD
<b>\$160,000</b>	<b>\$13,000</b>	<b>~400</b>	<b>\$33/Month</b>

Of course, you can always provide more! You may even be called to sponsor one of our buildings!

Do not forget to make prayer your priority, for yourselves and for the mission of our Parish. Our Father in heaven smiles on us, his children who live and worship together as One Strong Family!













[onestrongfamily.org](http://onestrongfamily.org)

