



ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT BUDGET 06-07

Each year pastors share with their parishioners a financial statement/budget for the current year. In Florida, most parishes share the statement around this time of the year, when many of their winter parishioners have returned for five or six months. You will find a copy of this year's statement/budget on page 9 of this bulletin. Some comments:

- I thank all of you who year after year take seriously your obligation to financially support our parish family. Your generosity enables us to support our *many ministries*, which touch the lives of many, many people and pays the *operational expenses* of running such a huge parish plant (eight facilities).
- Since we are primarily a service organization, a big chunk of our budget (approximately 47%) goes to salaries/benefits of our full time and part time staff. While I seek to pay our staff a *just wage*, you can be sure no one receives an exorbitant salary. As you might guess, most parishes our size have a much larger staff than we do.
- The gifts of time and talent of some of our volunteers saves the parish thousands of dollars each year—maybe as much as 200,000 a year. For example, we do not have a full time or part time parish administrator. Several ladies who volunteer in our parish office do work that many other parishes pay someone to do. Many parishes have a paid person coordinating ministering to the sick and coordinating the R.C.I.A.. I am most grateful to Pat Apfelthaler and Deacon Tom for coordinating both of these important ministries. Lee Dague and John Brewer help out our maintenance staff several days a week doing stuff that other parishes have paid maintenance staff doing. Dick Cross and Don Foy continue to save the parish an enormous amount of money by serving as Facilities Project Managers for several of our *Faith In Our Future Campaign* projects. I am most grateful to each of these dedicated volunteers.
- *Other volunteers*: In addition to the above volunteers we have hundreds more of you who give of your time and talent to our parish. Some of you give 10, 20 or 30 hours a *week* to your parish family. How could I even begin to thank you enough for your dedication and commitment. Of course, God knows

the extent of your service and that is all that matters.

- *Parish tithes*: When we place ourselves in the global village that we live in, we are very, very blessed. Hence, our obligation to share our material blessings with at least some of our brothers and sisters who live in very poor situations. This past fiscal year the biggest chunk of our \$100,000 tithe went to *Café Consciencion* \$41,000. You may remember the founder of this ministry to coffee farmers in Guatemala, Tim Kantz, spoke in our church in July. I had visited him in May and saw firsthand the great work he was doing to give a 'leg up' to three different communities. Other recipients of smaller portions of our tithe (between \$2,000—\$5,000) went to Resurrection Ranch, Gift of Water, Congregations for Community Actions, Habitat for Humanity, EWTN, CRHP Jamaica, and pro-life ministries etc.
- I do continue to meet with our Finance Committee several times a year to monitor parish finances and our annual budget. This past summer we had our second audit from the Diocese. All parishes in our Diocese are now required to have an audit every three years. I am very glad of this—even if it costs us \$10,000. I try very hard to be a good steward of the financial donations you give to our parish. If you have any questions about this year's financial statement, do not hesitate to contact our bookkeeper, Mary Russo, at 254-1595 ext 3078 email: mrusso@ascensioncatholicsh.org or myself, tobin2@bellsouth.net.

The Spirituality of Money

Some Catholics, perhaps many Catholics, think that preaching about money has little or nothing to do with spirituality or our salvation. Nothing could be further from the truth. The following are some miscellaneous reflections on this important issue:

- Biblical and Catholic Tradition teaches that the spiritual life *is all* of life. The spiritual life involves not only the times that we pray, think about God, read the Bible, come to church etc. The spiritual life also involves our work, finances, relationships, recreation etc. God is just as interested in how we handle our finances and check books as he is in our prayer life.
- God is the giver of *all* good things. This is even true when we have worked very hard for our money. The

only real way to thank the Lord for his gifts to us is to responsibly nurture them and generously share them to bless the communities in which we belong.

The Scriptures clearly calls us to a life of generosity.

“To him to whom much has been given much will be expected.” When we individually and as a parish place ourselves in the context of the global village that we live in, then we can easily see that *much* has been given to us and much will be expected. Today’s gospel about the generosity of the poor widow reminds us that we are called to give from our substance and not just from our surplus or left overs. I think it is safe to say that God would judge us to be poor stewards of our finances when we only give our leftovers or loose change to our church and the poor.

- Good and faithful stewards of finances give *not* out of guilt but out of a deep “attitude of gratitude”. They look at their lives. They see themselves as very blessed and as a result, cheerfully share their financial blessings with their church and the poor. We have many witnesses of such generous stewardship in our parish family.

Some Action Suggestions

- If you are in a low fixed income, do consider giving something to our offertory collection even if it is a dollar a week. Just as Jesus praised the poor widow in today’s gospel for her pennies to the collection, he will praise you.
- Seek to be an ‘*intentional or percentage giver*’ to your parish and to the poor. In other words, move beyond the practice of ‘loose change giving’. I invite all of you to ‘do the math’ and prayerfully decide what percentage of your weekly, monthly or yearly income you want to give your parish family and to the poor. (See chart on page 4 of this bulletin.) The giving practices of people with an unstable income will obviously fluctuate according to what they make in a given month.
- If you are presently an ‘*intentional or percentage giver*’ continue to edge towards the biblical ideal of 10% or more—5% to one’s parish and 5% to the poor (see page 4 for an outline of percentages). For biblical references to tithing see Genesis 14:18-20 and Malachi 3:7-10.
- If you are in a position to give, let’s say \$20 or \$50 a week to your parish and actually give little or nothing or loose change, then you ought to feel what is often called *healthy guilt*. Just think what our parish would be like if everyone choose to follow your example. Our buildings would be falling down

and we would have little or no staff to coordinate our many ministries and carry out God’s work in our parish.

- If you do not presently utilize the envelope system, consider doing so. When we give gifts to others we normally wrap our gift. The envelope is our wrapping for our gift to the Lord. Developing the good habit of using the envelopes on a regular basis, helps us to be both *disciplined* and *intentional* in our giving. If you presently do not receive envelopes and would like to do so, call Flo at the parish office extension 3050 or email her at: fdowney@ascensioncatholicsh.org. It usually takes about 6-8 weeks before you receive your envelopes. If you usually give on a *monthly* basis for convenience, consider giving weekly. Why? It sets a good example for those around you. In church our behavior is *contagious* be it in the area of singing, praying, hospitality or placing a donation in the basket. Whether we realize it or not we do set a good example for those around us when they see us place our envelope in the basket. I am grateful to all of you who make up for the weekends you are not here by placing those envelopes with your donation in the basket when you return. If you presently receive envelopes but hardly ever use them, please call the parish office so that we can remove you from that mailing list.
- *Electronic giving*: This past year we made it possible for people to give electronically. To date about 60 households use this form of giving. If you are interested in more information about this form of giving, see page 4 of today’s bulletin.
- Parents when you train your kids to give to the church and poor, you are teaching them one of life’s most important lessons.
- Bottom line—give from an attitude of gratitude. Be a cheerful giver. Be glad that you are in a position to give.

Have a blessed week,

