

FROM THE PASTOR'S



Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time November 16, 2008 A

COMMENTS ON OUR ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT AND BUDGET

You may wonder why we do not give this report at the end or beginning of our Fiscal Year in July. Two reasons: many parishioners are away at that time and of course our six-month winter parishioners are not here until October or November. This is the time when nearly all parishes in Florida share their financial report with their people.

1. I am most grateful to all of you who year after year faithfully and generously support financially our parish. Without your help we could not do all the wonderful things that we do at Ascension. In these very difficult times, I am most grateful that our offertory collection is holding. Thanks a thousand times over.

2. I try hard to be a *good* and *responsible* steward of your donations to our parish. At Ascension we are blessed with wonderful volunteers whose gifts of time and talent save the parish a significant amount of money each year. Many parishes have paid personnel doing work that many of our volunteers do faithfully year after year. Specifically I am once again very grateful to Dick Cross and Don Foy for the hundreds of hours they give to overseeing various facilities projects. I am grateful to Lee Dague (electrical) and John Brewer (telephone) for their work on campus. Lee is retiring from his volunteer work (though not totally). Any of you with electrical skills that would like to help our maintenance staff? If so, PLEASE consider. For more information, talk to Eddie. Also looking for folks to help us maintain our Plaza between that church and Parish Hall.

Now for some comments on the Financial/Budget Report. In expansion comments on some of the one line items of the Report, I offer some more details. As I do so with a certain reluctance—knowing that each breakdown calls for more details. I will continue to work on looking for ways to save the parish money.

Other Income: Interest (good last year, don't talk about this year) and miscellaneous donations apart from offertory.

Full time staff (14 full-time and 13 part-time) Our fourteen full-time personnel: Sr. Immaculata, Flo Downey (who will retire next September), Maria Sittig, Eddie Berrios, Mary Russo, Anne Dorros, Deacon McElwee, Mary Birmingham, Betsy Glasenapp, Matt

Spence, Ashley Breaux, Hank Laneuville, Charlene Tate and myself. Most of our 13 part-time staff only work a few hours each week.

Liturgy and Music. The two big ticket items in this area are bread and wine (\$16,000), environment and flowers (\$10,000).

Parish Tithing Outreach— At the end of last year's fiscal year we gave a report on how tithing money was used in '07-'08

Operational Expenses: Repairs and upkeep of our seven facilities and grounds (\$136,000) Utilities: FPL, water and sewer, gas, garbage removal (\$127,000). Telephone \$11,000.

Administrative Costs: Meetings & Travel, Office Expenses, Staff Development & Continuing Education, Office Supplies, Postage, Leased Equipment, Copies, Supplies, Legal & Accounting (see below audit), Advertising, Office Equipment, Bank Fees, Casual Labor, Property Taxes

Audit: Every three years every parish in the diocese has an audit which I am grateful about. Cost: \$13,000—which I am not grateful for.

Aid to the School. The school's current budget is \$2,437,843. We have almost 500 students in the school. Staff: Full Time 32 and Part time 22.

Breakdown of school budget

Tuition Fees 80% - Parish Offertory 6.2% - Bingo 5% - Special School Envelope 3% - Endowment 3% - Casino Night 1% - Festival 1% (the festival is of course a projection). The percentages have been rounded off. (This year we have budgeted \$150,000 for the school which is 6.2%.) The \$150,000 from the offertory, Endowment Fund (\$60,000) Thrift Store (\$40,000) all goes towards tuition aid. Money from Bingo, the Special School Envelope, Casino Night and Parish Festival goes towards the operation of the school—along with tuition fees.

This past year tuition fees for one child were raised \$900 (a 25% raise). Seventy-three families (118 students) are receiving tuition aid. Whether we have 30, 25 or 17 children in a classroom our expenses are the same. Setting aside a large amount of money for tuition aid means we have a lot more children in school. I am most grateful to all of you who use the special School Envelope thereby going the extra mile to help our

school. If Catholics schools are to remain open and competitive, they will need a lot of help from our parish family.

Finance Committee: Catherine Key (Chairperson; John Nanna; Mary Carney; Scott Roslonowski; Mary Russo (Parish Bookkeeper); Fr. Eamon Tobin. We meet every other month.

Some Reflections on the Spirituality of Money.

1. The way we manage and spend our money is a spirituality matter—for the spiritual life has to do with every aspect of our lives and not just with those times when we pray or are in church. Because the issue of our finances is a very personal matter, we usually do not talk to others about it—not even to God. Recently, I read a book on a biblical approach to finances called *Your Money Counts*. In the book, the author, Howard Dayton, tells the following story.

When the Crusades were being fought during the 12th century, the crusaders employed mercenaries to fight on their behalf. Because it was a religious war, the crusaders insisted that the mercenaries be baptized before fighting. As they were being baptized, the mercenaries would hold their swords out of the water to symbolize the one thing in their life that Jesus Christ did not control. They had the freedom to use the swords in any way they wished.

Today many people handle their money in a similar fashion, though they may not be as obvious about it. They hold their wallet or purse “out of the water,” in effect saying, “God, You can be the Lord of my entire life except for my money. I am perfectly capable of handling that myself.”

2. *Being faithful in small matters counts.* Luke 16:10 states: “He who is faithful or trustworthy in small matters will be faithful in great matters.” How do we know if a teenager is going to take care of his first car? Observe how he took care of his bicycle. Someone has said: “Small things are small things, but faithfulness with small things is a big thing.” People say that they would give a lot of money away if they had a million dollars. This probably is not true if they are not generous with what they presently have.

Practical Suggestions for Action

1. If you live on 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 for her pennies to the collection, he will praise you.
2. Seek to be an ‘intentional or percentage giver’ to your parish. 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. (See chart on page five of this bulletin.) The giving

practices of people with an unstable income will obviously fluctuate according to what they make in a given month.

3. 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 if you have not already reached this goal. (See page 5 for an outline of percentages.) For biblical references to tithing, see Genesis 14:18-20 and Malachi 3:7-10.

4. If you presently do not utilize the *school envelope* in your monthly package and are in a position to do so, consider helping us out.

5. If you presently have the practice of giving monthly, consider giving weekly (even if three envelopes are empty). 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. That is why I publicly give my offering at Mass. I, too, wish to be one of those who set a good example.

6. If you do not receive the monthly envelope package and would like to do so, please contact Flo at the parish office 254-1595 ext. 3050, fdowney@ascensioncatholicsch.org. See information on Electronic Giving on page five of bulletin.

7. If you presently receive the monthly package and hardly ever use them, please contact Flo at the parish office so that we do not continue having the expense of mailing envelopes to parishioners who do not use them.

8. If you don’t financially support your parish family and are in a position to do so or only give loose change when you could be much more generous, you should experience what is called *healthy guilt*—the guilt we ought to feel for failing to do what we ought to do.

9. I read the following recently: “When you give cheerfully, it is an act of worship. When you give begrudgingly it is not.” But please know that this Pastor will cheerfully accept and appreciate all donations those given cheerfully or those given begrudgingly.

Again a big **Thank You** to all who support our parish financially. If you have any questions or comments on our Financial Report, please feel free to share them with myself or Mary Russo our Parish Bookkeeper email—mrusso@ascensioncatholicsch.org.

Have a blessed week,

