



COMMENTS ON OUR ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT AND BUDGET

You may wonder why we do not present our Financial Report at the end or beginning of our Fiscal Year in July. Two reasons: many of our regular parishioners are away at that time and our six-month winter parishioners do not arrive until October or November. This is the time when nearly all parishes in Florida share their financial report with their people. On page 4 of this bulletin, you will see our Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2008-2009.

1. I am most grateful to all of you who year after year faithfully and generously support our parish financially. Without your help we cannot do all the wonderful things that we do inside and outside our parish. 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. Since I came to Ascension in September 2001, we have not had a Parish Manager, which nearly all parishes our size have. Savings to the parish for that eight-year period: about \$500,000. A big part of a Parish Manager's job is overseeing the maintenance of our facilities and overseeing building projects. In the past years, this work had been done by Dick Cross and Don Foy, to whom I am most grateful. I am equally appreciative of the many, many hours that Lee Dague (electrical) and John Brewer (phone), and Joe Eisen who recently joined, have contributed to the parish. If you have a talent that could help us with the upkeep and maintenance of our facilities, please consider sharing it. For example, one school family, Frank Eckert, periodically pressure-cleans all of our walkways. I am thankful to Pat Apfelthaler for coordinating our Ministry to the Sick and Homebound, which in most parishes is headed up by a paid staff.

Beginning in December, we will be emailing our monthly newsletter (savings: \$4,500). Those who do not have an email can pick up the newsletter at church. Our Ministers to the Sick will take it to the sick and homebound parishioners.

Now for some comments on some of the line items of our Report—which by the way gives more details than the vast majority of parish reports. As I offer more specifics on the Report, I am very aware that each detail invites people to look for further details.

Full time staff. 14 full-time and 14 part-time

Liturgy and Music. The two BIG expenses in this area are bread and wine (\$15,000), environment and flowers (\$11,500).

Parish Tithe Outreach. At the end of last year's fiscal year, we gave a report on how tithe money was used in '08-'09.

Operational Expenses. Repairs and upkeep of our seven facilities and grounds (\$127,400); utilities: electric, water, sewer, gas, and garbage removal (\$138,500); telephone \$14,400.

Administrative Costs. Office expenses: office supplies, postage, office equipment and leased equipment, copies, advertising, bank fees, casual labor, property taxes and insurance.

Aid to the School. The school, with an enrollment of over 500 students, has a current budget of \$2,559,155. Staff: 32 full-time and 25 part-time.

The school also receives help from Bingo, Special School Support Envelope, Casino Night, Thrift Store, Parish Festival and miscellaneous private donations.

Finance Committee: Catherine Key, CPA (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 biblical approach to finances entitled *Your Money Counts*. The author, Howard Dayton, tells the following story.

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 won the lottery. This probably is not true if they are not generous with what they presently have.

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

Practical Suggestions for Your Consideration

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 you all to “do the math” and prayerfully decide what percentage of your weekly, monthly or yearly income you want to give your parish family. 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, i.e. 5% to your parish and 5% to the poor if you have not already reached this goal. 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 contributing to the formation of the future leaders of our church and society.

5. If you presently make the practice of giving monthly, consider giving weekly (even if the other 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 each week 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 Teresa at the parish office (254-1595 ext 3050) or email her at tromano@ascensioncatholicsch.org. For information on Electronic Giving and Credit Card Giving, see page five of this bulletin.

7. If you presently receive the monthly package and never use them, please contact Teresa at the parish office so that we do not continue having the expense of mailing envelopes to parishioners who do not use them.

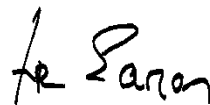
8. If you do not financially support your parish family and are in a position to do so, or only give loose change when you could be much more generous, you should experience what is called *healthy guilt*—the guilt we ought to feel for failing to do what we ought to do.

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, whether given cheerfully or 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 me or with Mary Russo, our Parish Bookkeeper (email: mrusso@ascensioncatholicsch.org).

Have a blessed week,



The more generous we are with our Time, Talent and Treasure, the more we become like our generous God who daily gives us the opportunity to enjoy another day, week and year here on earth.