

Dear beloved parishioners,

I continue to be so grateful to be here! I love you all and am having a great time. I so appreciate how welcoming you have been to me. I also know that many of you have questions about how we have weathered the pandemic and what our plan is for the future. So, as we approach the end of the year, I would like to give a slight update about where we stand as a parish and where we are headed:

1) Financial Status:

A) Year to date, our collections are down about \$35,000 and we are on pace to run a \$50,000 deficit. Fortunately, we did receive a PPP loan from the government, which has helped a lot.

2) Maintenance projects:

B) The roof- The bids we received for the school and gym roof came in much higher than we had anticipated, because we have discovered asbestos. So, we are in the process of looking into all of our options.

C) HVAC in the gym- One of our units is failing, and the other is not likely to last much longer. The cost to replace both units will likely cost \$25,000-35,000.

3) Parish Staff:

A) Director of Operations and Director of Evangelization- One of the objectives of Uniting in Heart (the Diocesan plan) is to take administrative burdens off of missionary pastors, so that they can focus less on office work and more on shepherding the flock.

Because of this, the diocese would like every pastorate to re-organize their staff. Specifically, they want us to have a Director of Evangelization and a Director of Operations. These jobs are similar to some of our current staff positions, but with some important distinctions. They may be appointed internally or hired externally. The "Fellowship" team will help me identify these positions (see below).

4) Parish Visioning for the future-

A) The Fellowship- I have formed a team to help me address each of these items and also to help develop a parish vision for the future (3, 5, 10, 20 years). I have called them "The Fellowship" because there are 9 of us- just like the Fellowship of the Ring (You will learn that I really like the Lord of the Rings, as we all should!). I am very grateful for their help! Please feel free to contact them. Their names are:

Joe Sadowski
Kathy Sadowski
Jack Whitecotton

Jayne Lough
Crystal Riehle
Hilary Grote

Anna Bravo Moore
Kent Minnette
Father Bower

5) Update on Live stream masses

- A) Many of you have noticed that we are still live-streaming our Masses, but only keeping the homily on youtube after Mass ends. This has been a surprise to some and has caused some frustration. This was my decision and I apologize for not clearly communicating the reason for this:

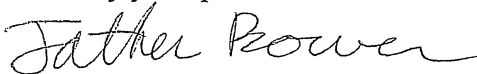
As Catholics, we believe that the Mass is the most important thing we participate in on this Earth. It is crucial that each of us attends Mass every Sunday. During the pandemic, we have had to change our expectations, because there is a widespread concern about the virus. Because of this, we have begun to live-stream the Mass for those who can't be present physically. This is not ideal and we are only doing it because of these extreme circumstances. Our first priority is to allow for people to come back to Mass in person in the safest way possible.

Now, here is why we are only keeping up the homily after Mass:

As a priest and as your pastor, I cannot in good conscience, encourage the practice of "watching" Mass after it has already taken place. The Mass is not something we watch; it is something we participate in. If you watch Mass while it takes place, you are *participating* remotely. When you watch it after the fact, you may be praying and you may be watching, but you are not *participating* in the Mass. The Mass already ended.

I understand that this may be disappointing, and I understand that. I am not trying to upset anyone, I just have to follow my conscience with this. You are more than welcome to contact me directly to discuss this further.

Gratefully your priest,



Father Bower