



CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST OF LITTLE CANADA

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www.sjolc.org • www.school.sjolc.org

August 4, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As many of you know, the past five years have been challenging in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. Saint John's hasn't been immune to the challenges our entire Catholic community has been facing, which is part of why I established the Pastoral Planning Process, which we have been reporting on quarterly since the parish-wide survey in fall 2017.

Throughout this process, it is abundantly clear that we are very fortunate to have so many talented parishioners, school parents and volunteers willing to give so selflessly to see our parish/school community weather these rough waters. As we head into fall, we have a couple more examples of your willingness to give of your time and talents. Please make note of these upcoming opportunities to participate:

- **Fall Festival:** Two days this year, with Mass from Bishop Cozens, expanded games/activities, a pork dinner, the School Marathon and live music. Save the dates: **September 28 and 29**. Want to volunteer? Contact the parish office: 651-484-2708.
- **Pictorial Directory:** It's been a decade since we last had a Parish Directory. Please sign up for one of these times to participate in this free service offered to our parish by LifeTouch. See details in the Gathering Space on weekends, or on our website: sjolc.org/photo-directory. Upcoming dates: **August 20–24, September 17–21, November 5–9**.

As it's the beginning of a new Fiscal Year, I want to report briefly on our year-end financials. Our Sunday offering was down \$26,864 (-3.2 percent) from last fiscal year. Sunday Collection for the year is down \$161,122 from five years ago. The church's net gain was \$158,831, while the school's net loss was \$461,410. Overall the Parish net loss for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2019, was \$302,579. It's important to acknowledge this is not good news, and in particular maintaining support of our school ministry is most in need of immediate attention.

Thanks to the efforts of our Stewardship Committee's census, we now have an accurate measure of active families (defined as those who have given to or participated in parish activities within the past three years): right around 928. This updated number reflects fewer families than we once thought, yet it also means our percentage of giving is still quite good. Please reach out to me directly if you have any questions about these numbers.

In being transparent with our finances, we've been publishing financial information in the bulletin under the Stewardship Corner reflecting our budget. Those reports were tracking us to a budget that was in deficit last year (meaning we knew operating costs were not covered by an accurately planned anticipated income). As I am committed to continued comprehensive transparency, we

will work with Finance Council this fall to come up with a format that better reflects these realities. We need to turn this trend around, and we have a plan.

I've targeted a goal of balancing our church and school budget by the end of calendar year 2021, and we are already taking action. This past spring, we instituted several cuts (the reduction in force at the school chief among them) that saves \$190,000 in this fiscal year alone. We are doing our own lawn care, no longer utilizing night janitorial services and have implemented a phone system that saves significant dollars long-term. In the school, principal Dan Hurley is rolling out advisory working groups in the areas of finance, development and marketing, and he welcomes nominations to these groups from across the parish community. This coming school year, we have 11 new students; enrollment for PreK-8 is at 142; this number is down from 153 last year, but keep in mind we graduated 18 from the eighth-grade class, and we have more families pending. Of course, any assistance in encouraging more students to consider Saint John's is the surest way each and every one of you can help. We are still viable, and a corner is being turned.

We are committed to continuing this momentum, and I invite all our church and school families to have a voice in our future plans. Thanks to the generous donations of parishioners who have underwritten this investment, we have contracted with Cornerstone Development Strategies to conduct a Planning Study for our parish and school. Cornerstone will conduct confidential interviews and post a short online survey, and paper copies will be made available for those not able to access a computer. The results will be delivered to parish leadership in September, which could lead us into a Capital Campaign, the aim of which is to strengthen us fiscally and structurally. I invite and encourage each family to participate in this very important process. We will begin the Planning Study the weekend of August 10-11 and will conclude the process on August 30. Please watch the bulletin and emails for updates.

As ever, I cannot thank you enough for your continued prayers, participation and support. I hope each of you has a blessed and restful completion of your summer, and I look forward to all the activity we have planned this fall. We plan to have further updates around October.

Peace,

Father Tom Balluff, pastor