



Church of Saint John the Evangelist of Little Canada

380 Little Canada Road East ♦ Little Canada, MN 55117 ♦ (651) 484-2708

www.sjolc.org ♦ www.school.sjolc.org

October 21, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

October is a busy month at Saint John's! It kicks off every year, of course, with the birthday of our parish (we are 168 years old this year!), and also coincides with the Annual Parish Financial Report (APFR), as well as the renewal of our Stewardship commitments. You'll find the Stewardship forms enclosed with this letter, and you will be receiving the APFR next week. Since Fall 2017, I've also offered quarterly updates on our Pastoral Planning process, which set forth goals in the areas of finance, welcoming, stewardship, and church and school unity. We mark three years on this initiative this quarter, and I will continue to offer updates like these until we've achieved all of our goals.

We'll start off with finances: The big news, of course, is that on September 18 we paid off our mortgage, thanks to the success of our capital campaign, Strengthened in Faith. Through September 30, \$968,351 was pledged, and to date, I am so humbled to announce we have received 46 percent of our goal in the first year. After paying off our mortgage, we have \$141,973.51 cash in the bank available for future major expenditures. Stay tuned, as we mark one year on our Strengthened in Faith journey before year's end, and we will be offering news on next steps in the weeks to come.

After six months in quarantine, our Sunday Collections have been a bit of a roller coaster. Those funds continue to be critical to our staffing and operational needs, day to day, and I cannot thank you enough for your past generosity. I urge you to keep support of our parish in mind during these times many of us are apart. As a reminder, we have set up a secure drop box in the vestibule (between the front doors) of the Parish Office for Sunday envelope drop off, and we have our secure online giving page linked on our website, www.sjolc.org/giving.

We have good news from the school: Despite COVID-19, classes resumed in person on September 8. Principal Dan Hurley (with guidance from the Archdiocese) has crafted a detailed Pandemic Preparedness and Readiness Plan, that gives clear instruction on how to maintain safe and sanitized learning environments for our school kids, ensuring the continuation of live, robust Catholic education. As a result, K-8 school enrollment is up to 156, with the addition of new public-school students at all grade levels. Additionally, there are two *full* kindergarten classrooms this year, plus another 35 preschoolers, which are promising signs for future enrollment. With the addition of two Masses on Wednesday morning, all our school children are now attending live each week. School challenges include keeping the classrooms open as long as is safe to do so, and retaining into the years to come these wonderful new students who joined this year for the in-person experience.



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This brings us to updates on both church and school unity, and welcoming. Hopefully you all heard about and even participated in some way in our annual school marathon, which kicked off our one-day fall festival this year on September 26. What a wonderful success this weekend was! The school surpassed its goal of \$25,000, raising more than \$37,000, a record in recent memory for this fundraiser. And the fall festival also was a wonderful success—we sold 341 grand raffle tickets and sold out of almost all of the food!

But that wasn't the end of the weekend: On September 27, we welcomed Archbishop Hebda to our campus for the kick-off of "Discipleship Sunday." A recording of his presentation, "What Is a Disciple?" can be found on our website, www.sjolc.org/discipleship-sunday. This Saint John's-owned event series continues throughout the school year. The Discipleship Sunday Committee, in collaboration with every single group and committee within the parish, has crafted an exciting line-up of presentations and activities geared toward sharing and growing our Faith in a family-friendly, socially safe environment. Discipleship Sunday activities are conveniently positioned right in between both Sunday Masses (at 9:30 AM). Each month, there will be free childcare for ages 0-5, age-appropriate activities for older children, and engaging speakers or presentations for adults, along with delicious food, juice and coffee. The goals of these gatherings are simple: To help grow disciples in our Faith, beginning at whatever place you might be along your faith journey, and to welcome more people in—not only to Saint John's, but to a better understanding of our Catholic beliefs. Our second event in the series includes a presentation from NET Ministries' David Rinaldi, as well as an All Saints Day activity for the kids, so mark your calendars for 9:30 AM November 1.

Which brings us to Stewardship: We of course recognize that the pandemic has created hurdles in our typical giving of time, talent and treasure. It is truly in these times that we might reach out to better support our parish community in new and creative ways. Please take the time to look at and pray over our Stewardship Forms this year, and consider how you might be able to give a little differently of yourself in 2021.

As we make our way toward the end of the liturgical year, and yet another snowy and cold Minnesota winter, know that you are in my thoughts and prayers daily, my friends, and never hesitate to reach out directly.

Peace,

Father Tom Balluff
Pastor