It has been a difficult and challenging year for St. Mary Parish, our culture, and our country, but evidently, the Lord has chosen us for these days. And so, as we look ahead, the time is at hand to begin again as His Body to rebuild a local Catholic culture where the Strength, Truth, and Beauty of Jesus Christ is alive.

This report is a first step. We take a look at the present state of our worship, ministries, and finances, and how we might be revitalized after months of various degrees of lockdown. Thank you, all, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, for your persevering in grace and faithful support of our Parish through it all.

To repeat, the time is at hand to begin again.

Many blessings,
Msgr. Kevin Royal

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**SIGNS OF HOPE & GRACE IN CHALLENGING TIMES**

A vibrant faith community sees opportunity where there are challenges, graces where there are obstacles, and hope where there is discouragement.

- COVID and the clergy abuse scandals have severely impacted our Parish, yet Parishioner resilience and support is remarkable
- There is a serious decline in offertory and overall revenues, yet some Parishioners have given above and beyond their usual offerings
- We cannot gather in large numbers for Mass, yet we have devoted Mass attendance despite COVID restrictions
- Religious Education has been limited to virtual engagement, yet many families have participated in our extra activities
- First Communion & Confirmation were limited to small groups, yet, the children and families celebrated these sacraments joyfully
- We have been unable to gather in large numbers, yet participation in virtual prayer, Bible study and discussion groups is enthusiastic and generous volunteers have given much of their time to help

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**IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES**

- Deepen our prayer, faith, & commitment to the Lord & His Church
- Address the significant shortfall in offertory revenue
- Complete the Gather & Grow project
- Remain committed to our We Stand With Christ pledges
- Increase focus and outreach to youth and families
- Prepare for Parish renewal & the reopening of the church building
- Grow St. Mary’s commitment to the poorest and most needy
Operational Losses & Cash Decline

Our Parish is facing serious financial challenges due to the $550,000 decline in revenues over the last 3 years, as noted in the graph below. During this period, a nearly 20% reduction in expenses has been insufficient to offset the revenue decline, resulting in a projected operating loss of $225,000 this fiscal year, and an actual loss of $165,000 last year. In addition, the Parish’s unrestricted cash reserve is projected to be $200,000 by the end of this fiscal year, which covers approximately one month of operating expenses, the lowest level in recent years. At the current rate, the cash reserve will be less than $100,000 in the 4th quarter of this calendar year.

Shared Recovery Plan

We have developed a simple plan outlined below. Working together—Parish and Parishioners—we are confident that we can eliminate the operational losses and regain a solid financial footing for the Parish.

◊ Parish will further reduce annualized expenses $100,000 by this June.
◊ Parishioners will be asked to increase offertory from the current rate of $20,000 per week to $30,000 per week, a total increase of $520,000, resulting in a total annual offertory of $1,560,000, an amount the Parish has achieved in the past. While this increase may seem daunting, the graphic at right indicates how reasonable this challenge can be to overachieve our goal if all registered Parishioners contribute. We will develop focused plans during the year to encourage all Parishioners across the wide range of giving capability.

Every Little Bit Matters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Donation</th>
<th>Annual Donation</th>
<th>1,000 Families Annual Value</th>
<th>1,000 Families Annual Value</th>
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<tr>
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<td>$520</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td><strong>$520,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Value = **$832,000**

“Opportunity” When 3,000 Registered Families Participate
**Interior Renovation**

Many new additions

- Pews, floors, sidewalls
- Stations of the Cross
- Sacristy and confessionals
- Infrastructure (heating – lighting – sound)
- Murals, restoring some color

**New Adoration Chapel**

- Beautiful, octagonal, rotunda-like space with ceiling in keeping with the Church interior
- 8 stained glass windows

**New Gathering Space**

- New Baptismal location
- Small social gatherings
- Pre-ceremony gatherings (weddings, funerals, etc.)

**Re-opening**: While steady progress has been made on construction, the date for re-opening the Church has been delayed to mid-June due to permit, weather and infrastructure issues. As re-opening begins, walk thurs and extra Masses will be offered, so Parishioners can become oriented to the new building.

**We Stand With Christ Funding**: Funding for the project relies heavily on Parishioner pledges to the diocesan *We Stand With Christ* campaign, as 50% of total pledges collected are shared with the Parish. At this point, 15% of those who have pledged have not made any payment, and many others are in arrears, which has seriously impacted the amount received to date. We encourage anyone who has made a pledge to do their best to fulfill their commitment. Thank you!
Reopening & Renewal - Preparatory Time of Prayer

It won’t surprise Parishioners to know that just as the Parish is looking to a post-pandemic renewal, so is Bishop Caggiano—for the entire Diocese of Bridgeport. You will be seeing things about the Bishop’s ideas in the weeks and months to come. However, his first step is one we as a parish should take as our own: to not let the next few months become a time of over-planning and activity, but rather a preparatory and foundational time of prayer in which we ask the Lord for guidance and take stock of where we are as individuals and as a parish community. Our next steps and actions will then have the best chance to be more fruitful and integrated.

While we have already identified crucial areas of focus—youth and young families, financial health of the Parish, outreach to absent Parishioners and meeting the challenge of an increasingly secular town and culture—these and other issues must be addressed in prayer, with faith, and with a Catholic spirit.

Please pray that...
~ this COVID time be reflected upon in terms of renewing faith
~ that we see the most important areas to address
~ we act together with trust in the Lord and the goodness of life in Him
~ we grow in a deeper appreciation for the sacrifice of the Mass and Eucharist
~ the Lord identify and raise up leaders among us for his works

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Responses to many of your anticipated questions will be available on our Parish website this coming week.

WAYS TO GIVE

Please prayerfully consider increasing your weekly offertory.

Online Giving

- Online Giving offers you convenient & easy online access and allows for uninterrupted giving
- Please refer to the Online Giving tab on our Parish website to sign up or call the Parish office for assistance, (203) 438-6538 x106
- When you sign up, please consider a payment method other than a credit card to help us eliminate $10,000 of credit card fees per year, thereby increasing our offertory

Mail in – St. Mary Parish, 55 Catoonah Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877

Drop in basket at Mass

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. —2 Corinthians 9:6-8