

## **STATE OF THE PARISH HOMILY—2021 ST RAPHAEL CATHOLIC CHURCH**

As it is my custom every June or July, I offer you my Annual Report on the status of our parish. As always, this report includes where we are financially as we end this fiscal year and as we emerge from the pandemic, a little about what we hope to accomplish this next year.

### **THE NUMBERS:**

I will start with the good news. Even though we have struggled financially over the past 16 months, we did manage to pay off the Parish Center loan in February. We paid it off 2 years early thanks to everyone's generosity over the years.

Now the bad news. We are ending this fiscal year, June 30<sup>th</sup> 2021, with around an \$80,000 deficit. We also end it owing the diocese \$100,000 that we borrowed the previous fiscal year (2019-2020) just to be able to pay our bills. Unfortunately, this new fiscal year we are still projecting another \$103,000 deficit for which we may need to take out another loan from the diocese. The good news is that our collections have rebounded a little, however, once a deficit is created it is hard to bounce back quickly. Sadly, we are the only parish in the diocese that has had to borrow from the diocese to make ends meet during this pandemic. I urge you to continue with your weekly donations and to donate as well to our Debt Reduction Fund. I see no easy way out of the predicament we are facing.

### **THIS UPCOMING YEAR:**

Rather than dwelling on the few things that happened this last year, I will focus on a much brighter future ahead. I begin by welcoming our new associate, Father Omar Galván. He will bring a fresh face to our parish this year, so please make him feel welcome.

Effective this July our Mass schedule will be changed slightly. We now have Friday Masses back on the schedule and we have 8 weekend Masses to meet your needs: Saturday at 4:00PM in English. On Sunday, we have a 6:00AM in English, 7:15AM in Spanish, 8:45AM in Spanish, 10:30AM in English, and 12:30PM, 5:00PM and 7:00PM in Spanish.

I am happy to announce that every program, ministry, group, fundraiser, and outreach program will be able to restart during this new fiscal year. The only exception is Summerfest which will restart in August of 2022.

Our formation programs, RCIA and PRE will resume in September. In fact, you will be able to register your child this summer. All small ministry groups and organizations have already begun meeting. We are currently offering leadership workshops and a September retreat for our leaders of the large Hispanic groups which will begin meeting in October.

Father Jon Miskin will resume his work with Young Adult Ministry (ages 18 to 40 years old) with a laser focus as we emerge from this pandemic. I am excited to see what he can do.

Our Seventh annual Brewtober Chilifest is set for Saturday, October 9<sup>th</sup>. Like in years past, this event is for adults 21 and older and will feature Craft Beer sampling, live music, a silent auction, bratwurst and homemade chili. Awards will be given to both the best beer entry and chili entry of the night.

Guadalupe celebrations, Posadas and Via Crucis will resume this year under the leadership of Father Omar, and we will see what blessings he brings to these annual celebrations.

Our Sisters' ministry continues to grow. They work mostly with our young Latina girls between the ages of 12 and 22 who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. Sisters Deyanira, Minerva and Sandra have been working with these girls and their families and have seen some fruits to their ministry. If you think you can use their help, their information is in the bulletin or you can call the office and we will put you in touch with them. Because they are working under a Catholic Extension Society grant, their ministry is free of charge to those they help.

Our monthly Food Sales will return in January of 2022. Our Food Pantry will reopen with its regular hours in July, helping families in the community; however, our Adoration Chapel will continue with limited hours for a little while longer. We will also offer Covid vaccination clinics throughout the year with the desire to vaccinate as many people as we can. We would like to restart our STEP program at some point this fall, but we need someone to coordinate this effort. Call the office if you are interested.

**DREAMS:**

I am putting all my dreams on hold for a while until we are back on our feet. Nonetheless, our facilities are in big need of maintenance. I have our Pastoral Council working on a priority list of things that need urgent attention. I can tell you, the biggest issue we face is our roof.

**BIG EVENTS:**

As we look forward to our parish being “back to normal” in 2022, we will celebrate two great spring events. Deacon José Jaime Nieto will be ordained a priest for the Diocese of Little Rock next May and will offer his first Masses here at St Raphael on Memorial Day weekend.

Eduardo Andrade, Oscar Lopez, Rob Phillips, and Luis Sanchez will be ordained permanent deacons next June and will truly be a blessing to our parish with their wisdom, service and example in the years ahead.

**IN CONCLUSION:**

As I complete my eleventh fiscal year here with you all, I continue to make this promise: I am here for you; Father Miskin and Father Omar are here for you. There will always be many changes as our parish moves forward on its journey of faith, but I remain committed as your pastor. I love this parish and what it stands for. As I said before, I am not going anywhere because I believe in each of you and what we can do together. I believe our best days are ahead of us and I believe that our Lord is with us always.

I want to thank my wonderful staff. I am truly blessed to have each and every one of you working for our parish. Thank you.

As I say every year, as your pastor, I realize that I am not in control of events or what will happen in the future; our Heavenly Father is. For that I am eternally grateful because I am only His servant. I place our parish in His hands every night and pray for each and every one of you.

Our complete financial report, with actual figures for this past fiscal year and our new budget figures for this new fiscal year, will be available in print in July or August. A copy of this State of the Parish report is available on our webpage now and a link will be sent out in next week’s Bulletin email. Thank you for your support and may God bless our parish and our families. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

—Fr. John Connell