

This last week has been a mixed bag of emotions and feelings for me; frustration, joy, anxiety, peace, confusion, and hope are just some. These emotions and feelings speak to a deeper reality that dwells within each of us...a deeper reality that our scriptures speak to today.

From the 1st reading: "Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!"

From the 2nd reading: "Seek what is above...think what is above, not what is on earth."

From the Gospel: "Thus it will be for all who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God."

In light of these 3 pieces of scripture; I would like to give an overview of where we are as a parish today. I will break down this overview then into the 3 aspects of life in this parish: the spiritual life, the fiscal life, and the physical life.

THE SPIRITUAL

From my vantage point I have seen an amazing spiritual life beginning to blossom in the parish.

- Our men's group continues to seek ways to be formed as men of God. Not only do they meet for fellowship and support every Saturday morning a handful of men meet before that to discuss the teachings of the Church for a time of catechetical advancement.
- Our women's group, known as LIT, has shown continued growth as they too meet as a means of fellowship and support usually discussing pertinent topic from the teachings of the Church at each meeting.
- Mass, weekend and daily, attendance and participation continues to increase! We recently had a daily Mass with 65 people in attendance. I often marvel when I close my mouth and my eyes during the Our Father and other parts of the Mass just how enthusiastically you pray with your hearts and souls.
- Eucharistic Adoration numbers have increased as has the number of people that I see coming and going from the chapel...This is a great sign of spiritual growth as a parish. With that we have discussed expanding times that Eucharistic Adoration is offered.
- I have witnessed and heard from visitors just how welcoming we are becoming. As I have seen firsthand the results of that welcoming spirit and a willingness to invite others to St. Patrick as I continue to see new faces leaving Mass with a smile.

Moving forward we will continue to be challenged to not be good enough but strive to better working towards becoming saints. I will challenge myself to be better in all things spiritual while challenging our staff to do the same. To present the best that we can offer

during various liturgies so that our worship becomes better tomorrow than it is today. Always seeking what is above so that all of us may become rich in what matters to God.

THE FISCAL

As I look at the Parish financial summary for the fiscal year July 1st through June 30th 2018/2019 I am very optimistic as to what the future holds for our parish life.

- Offertory is up 8% over last year. This is big!
- We finished the year \$389,000.00 in the black which has helped us to accomplish some pretty extensive work this summer.
- We have also reduced total spending to better reflect our financial realities.
- We are working at best practices in all things fiscal.

While these are very positive signs for our parish I approach them with some caution as I take a pretty conservative fiscal approach. We spent a lot of money this summer which always makes me a bit nervous as I look towards the current year.

Moving forward we will continue a conservative approach to our fiscal management while encouraging continued generosity from all of our members so that we become more stable in this area. Again, it is about not being satisfied with good enough but becoming better than where we are today.

THE PHYSICAL

Now to the physical life of our parish...our buildings and grounds. As I have mentioned before, the buildings and grounds are in a sad state and with each aspect that we attempt to remedy a dozen more things need attention in order to tend to the original project. This causes me great concern and honestly, a lot of anxiety and other negative feelings and emotions...I know, vanity of vanities! Seek what is above! Be rich in what matters to God!

Since the founding of St. Patrick Parish some pretty amazing buildings have been constructed with an eye to the now rather than an eye to the now and another eye to the future. A church building was constructed for worship which was soon too small to accommodate Mass attendance and so the current church was built to take care of the immediate need.

A school was next. The need was a school building so it was erected. Soon after another wing was erected because the original was becoming too small. A gymnasium was added etc. etc.

So there was a great response to a need as the parish continued to grow and become...but was there an understanding that in the future all of these buildings were going to need to be properly maintained. And if there was this understanding at that time when did we lose sight of maintaining our buildings and grounds, when did that stop becoming a priority or even an option?

For example: last week I was sent a video of one of our drinking fountains in the school. It was the day we had a tremendous amount of rain in a short period of time. From the drain of that drinking fountain shot a geyser of storm drain water from the roof! I am told this has

been happening for years at this same fountain and the procedure has always been to clean up the mess rather than fix the real problem which is improper plumbing! This mentality needs to stop! We can't let things continue to fester underneath and destroy all that was built for us to enjoy and to give us and our children a place in which to be nurtured in our faith. Needless to say that fountain has been shut down and a plumber has been called to replumb the fountain drain into a proper drain pipe. I can't believe that nobody ever thought of that response and would ignore the reality of that situation. Had it been plumber correctly from the beginning we would not have had this situation to begin with.

The roofing project has been more of the same. Because of a lack of maintenance to our brick work over the years water has entered the brick and destroyed a lot of it. You will see that one part of our roof line is much lower than the other parts of the roof line now. Our lack of properly maintaining what we have has cost us the brick that was there and cost us more financially than if we had simply maintained what was there. While this has been disappointing, I was expecting this to happen as we began the work.

The really frustrating part for me is the gym floor for a variety of reasons. We installed the current gym floor 4 years ago and it is already shot. This news was brought to my attention approximately 2 weeks ago. And then during my conversations with others I found out that a couple of injuries occurred as a result of that floor and it was still being used! And so I issued a stop use order for all athletic and school functions until the floor can be removed and replaced...not a fun decision to make given the timing of the school year and the volleyball season upon us.

In looking back at all of the correspondence between our administration and all of the vendors to get the root issues of the floor this is what we found.

- Another type of long-lasting floor was originally ordered but the cement needed to be ground down, leveled, and cleaned from all previous glue and debris. This came with a bill of \$4,900.00. Administration thought this excessive, so a lesser floating floor was installed.
- A set of bleachers was ordered. The bleacher company notified administration that the less expensive floor now being installed would not be able to handle the weight displacement of the bleachers as they were extended. This would cause a buckling of the floor and shorten the longevity substantially.

Needless to say, as a result of not wanting to spend \$4,900.00 to do the job correctly the floor is ruined and will need to be replaced. I know this frustrates many of you as it does me but it is only a reflection of what has been the mode of operation for this parish for a number of years.

Moving forward we will use best practices as we continue to fix what is broken and restore what has not been properly maintained...which includes your trust most of all. I will not do something cheaper if it means a standard of quality and safety can't be met because it will always bite us in the end. With an eye on the present and another on the future we will do great things together for this generation of parishioners and the generations of parishioners who will follow us.