

State of the Parish 2023

After discussion with the parish council, I have decided to deliver a “State of the Parish” Address to all of you. During this 125th year of our parish, it is good to look at both where we are strong and where we can still grow. As I think of where we are as a parish family, I see multiple areas of strength. One strength I have been privileged to witness in our parish family is your willingness to respond generously in raising funds for various projects. You all gave so generously, first for the renovation of our sanctuary, then for the repainting of the church, the new statues, the crucifix, the new stations of the Cross, the cassocks and surplices for the altar servers and the Holy Spirit statue. I am so grateful for all of your generosity over the last several years in helping to bring even more beauty to our church, helping it to be a place which lifts our minds and hearts to God as we gather for Mass, for Adoration, for Stations of the Cross and for personal prayer during the week and above all on Sunday. What great gifts you have given to future generations in this parish!

Another strength I recognize is our focus on adult faith formation. Deacon Doug has done a wonderful job over the years working with large groups of people who have consistently shown up for many different Bible Studies and faith growing programs. We have been able to provide extremely rich and deep teaching on our Catholic faith for our own parishioners, for those coming into the church through RCIA and even those outside of our parish.

I also see great things happening at Sacred Heart School. I have heard that parents are excited to send their kids to our school, because it is a place where they can not only grow in their knowledge, but also in faith. I am so excited that we have had multiple families express interest in having their children baptized and recently had one of our school children baptized at a school Mass. With the increased enrollment we have been seeing over the past couple of years, we are exploring the separation of two grades which had previously been combined. It is also very encouraging to me that we have been able to bring Randy Bradley, a licensed professional clinical counselor, to serve both our students and their families. This allows us to serve them in an even deeper way as they navigate some really tough situations. I also recognize with joy that our school culture is becoming more and more a family, with events like our school dance and school carnival being opportunities to come together for fun and fellowship.

While there are certainly many things to be excited about in our parish, there are also real challenges that we face. The reality for our parish is that our offertory has been flat year over year since 2014, while inflation and costs have risen. Since 2014, our operating expenses have increased by an average of 3.2% per year. Inflation has risen sharply; from around 1.2% in 2020 to 8.5% today. If each of us intentionally gives an increased percentage over the coming months, I am confident that we can end the fiscal year in July on an upward financial trajectory. We are seeing exciting growth happening in our parish which we can support and expand that growth financially with your help!

In addition to the strengths at Sacred Heart, there are places where I see exciting growth. One of these is our ability to evangelize. I pray that in the coming years, we become a parish where everyone feels equipped to be able to share their faith with confidence. And we are taking exciting steps in that direction. We have completed two training groups using materials from the group, the Evangelical Catholic. These training groups have been run by parishioners and have given 20 of our parishioners tools to be able to start their own faith sharing groups, and many have! This allows people in our

community to encounter Jesus not just in our four walls but in your homes, as well. What an awesome thing. I pray that this training continues with more of us, so that we can become even more equipped as a parish family to intentionally share the Good News of Jesus with others. Another huge encouragement for me is to see Alpha starting at the parish. This program has already helped friends, family members and co-workers to have deep conversations about the big questions of life in an atmosphere which is welcoming and friendly. Through this program, I know that Jesus is touching the hearts and minds of people both in our parish and beyond. These evangelistic opportunities are such a gift to our parish family and have plenty of room to grow and expand. Let's all pray that they do!

Beyond these areas of growth, there are plenty of other needs which we have at our parish. We will talk more about these in the Fall when we launch our Stewardship of Treasure Drive. I know that together as a parish family we can come together to support all of the great things God is doing here at Sacred Heart.

Overall, I can't tell you how grateful I am to serve you as your pastor. Truly, God is doing great things. I pray that the Holy Spirit continues to fuel us to grow as a dynamic community of missionary disciples, people whose love for Jesus touches everyone that we meet! I want to sincerely thank all of you for the many ways that you serve our parish family. We are so incredibly blessed and I cannot wait to see all that God has in store for us in the coming years. Know that you are all in my prayers!