

Parish Finances

One of my first tasks as a new pastor was to appoint a new parish finance council, which is required by canon law. The purpose of the finance council is to advise the pastor in the financial management of the parish, to review financial reports and annual budgets, and to ensure transparency and accountability in the use of parish funds.

In our first meeting of the new council, the members recommended that I share with all the parishioners what I shared with them, which is the effect the pandemic has had on our parish finances. They believe (and I agree) that it is better for all of you to know sooner, rather than later, what the consequences of the virus have been for our parish.

It probably won't surprise anyone to learn that there has been a significant decrease in donations during the months of the pandemic. This decrease began when the church was closed back in March, but it has continued even after Masses were allowed again in June. Collections at Mass have decreased by approximately 25%. There has been a small increase in the amount donated by E-giving, but with the cancellation of other annual fundraisers, such as Septemberfest, there has been a net loss in income of about 20%. Most of our major costs, such as salaries, insurance and utilities, have not changed, and we have also incurred additional costs for the supplies and equipment needed to disinfect the church after each time it is used. As a result, we expect a substantial deficit in the budget for the present fiscal year, which began on July 1, 2020.

I want all of you to know that I understand how much financial strain the pandemic has caused for many, especially those who lost their jobs and have struggled to make ends meet. This is certainly not a time to ask such people to continue supporting the parish. And I am very grateful to those who have continued to support the parish, even when many parish services could not be offered to you. As I stated in my letter to parishioners on August 1, 2020, I am resolved to be especially careful about parish costs and expenses. I am also willing to reduce costs wherever possible, in order to make sure that donations are used efficiently and that the parish can continue to function on a reduced level of income, if this becomes necessary. I hope to begin soon printing in the bulletin the income and costs for each month.

We all know that the pandemic has caused a ripple effect of financial harm on the economy, businesses, families and individual lives. Any organization that operates on the basis of voluntary donations is certainly vulnerable to these harmful effects. As an act of transparency, and upon the advice of the parish finance council, I want you all to be aware of the effects this pandemic has had on St. Julie's Parish, as I continue to monitor these consequences and determine carefully how to address them.