

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday per Annum - C  
Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8;  
I Corinthians 15:3-8, 11;  
Luke 5:1-11  
Little Flower - 2/10/19

My Brothers and Sisters,

Pope Francis recently quoted Bishop Fritz Lobinger: “The Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church.” Today it is my privilege to share with you at this Eucharist some highlights of our parish Stewardship and Accountability Report. Copies of the report are in your bulletin. I would invite and encourage you to study it carefully. Please understand that this covers July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018.

This past year our total number of families grew from 919 to 930. Our total number of parishioners grew from 2,050 to 2,080. Thirty-one new families registered last year, ten more than the previous year. The numbers of children and adults receiving one or more sacraments of initiation remained fairly constant as did the number of couples preparing for marriage. The only significant change was that only 26 individuals were buried from the parish compared to 42 the year before.

One of our challenges giving this report in February is that there is overlap between what happened in the previous fiscal year and what has already happened this fiscal year. As you may remember, during the last fiscal year, our beautiful statues were completely restored, funded by restricted donations from parishioners. This was the first complete restoration of the statues since the church was built in 1962. Likewise, we replaced the church grand piano with a higher quality and larger instrument, funded by restricted donations as a lasting memorial to Teresa Eckrich. Since the beginning of this fiscal year, we saw the complete restoration of the church sanctuary ceiling and crucifix to their original appearance when the church was built. Both of these projects were funded by non-parishioner private donors. Likewise, the figurines from our Nativity scene were repaired and restored by parishioner Dick Kramer. Also, the final new roofs and HVAC units for the rear of the church were installed.

As Christians, we are challenged to support one another in faith. We do this by spending quality time with each other. Our Parish Life Commission once again hosted the Parish Picnic, Halloween Party, Christmas Party, Advent Night, First Communion Luncheon, and Holy Thursday Soup Supper. This year as a special Advent project, they provided families with the makings of a birthday cake for Jesus. Coffee and donuts continue to be offered after the 8:30 a.m. Mass on most weekends under the new leadership of Mandie Wade, Shannon Estrada, and Mike Haigerty. Both the Men’s Club and the Ladies’ Club hold meetings and host social events and outings.

In addition, the Ladies Club raised funds for the altar and sanctuary, for flowers for Easter, Christmas, and the Novena, and to help with ordinary parish expenses. They also donated socks stuffed with soap, shampoo, toothbrush, and toothpaste for the homeless, made goodie bags to hand out to those begging on the street, and donated toiletries for the VFW to pass out to homeless vets. They also went Christmas caroling at several nursing homes. Members of the Ladies Club provided desserts for the fish fry and donated to the festival silent auction.

The Men’s Club hosted our weekly Lenten Fish Fry and the Mother’s Day Breakfast. They worked hard this past year keeping our grounds in order. Each month there was a work

day to complete various projects throughout our campus. They offered tailgating at several sporting events.

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade class hosted a Senior Prom for our senior parishioners, and the Adventurousome Group met monthly for lunch and some type of program, often involving students from the school. One month the meeting was open to all of our cohort parishes.

The Invite Commission hosted the three-part ChristLife series, the first in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, which was attended by people from various parishes in the Central Indiana area. 109 people attended “Discovering Christ”; 72 people attended “Following Christ”; and 54 people attended “Sharing Christ.” This month ChristLife has started again with “Discovering Christ.”

Our two primary outreach ministries are the Gabriel Project and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The Gabriel Project assisted 157 mothers with material goods such as diapers, wipes, and baby clothes. Working with the Men’s Club and several parishioners, they were able to furnish one person’s apartment with everything she needed to be independent. Through the generosity of parishioners, our St. Vincent de Paul Society helped 60 families at Thanksgiving and Christmas and made 219 home visits to assess needs of clients. 73 families were assisted with paying utilities, and 3 families received appliances or furniture. Bags of food were given as needed throughout the year.

Little Flower School is our largest ministry other than Sunday Eucharist. As of December 31, 2018, we had 331 students, up 5 from last year and up 78 from 2013. Because slightly over half of our students are non-Catholic, Little Flower School is one of our primary means of evangelization. Mrs. Anita Navin, our middle-school science teacher, was selected as an Indiana University Jacobs Educator for being a cutting-edge tech teacher. All of our K-2 teachers are certified in Orton-Gillingham multi-sensory teaching strategies. We had staff training and individual observations on Social Emotional Learning with author Calvalyn Day. We expanded our Resource department to two full-time teachers and one part-time aide and began robotics courses for grades 5 and 6. Finally, we introduced *The Little Way* character education program. The *Little Way*, of course, is St. Therese’s way.

Little Flower Parish remains in sound financial condition thanks in large part to your ongoing generosity. Sunday contributions were approximately \$10,000 above budget for fiscal year 2017-2018. This was first time in eight years that Sunday contributions were above budget. However, this was due to several large anonymous donations in the loose collection. Likewise, our total parish income exceeded budget due to increased school enrollment and other revenue sources. At the same time, expenses also exceeded budget for the year. Nevertheless, there was a net excess of income over expenses.

Through a generous bequest from Phil and Betty Caito, this summer we completed a major renovation of Duffey Hall, including new paneling on the walls, the refinishing of the floor, and a new A/V system, incorporating two additional TV monitors. I hope everyone has seen it.

This year the Parish Festival earned \$68,000. Susan Spilly-Lee became chairperson of the Stewardship Commission. Jacob Comley was hired as full-time maintenance tech, and we contracted with Astro Cleaning for night cleaning of the school.

It seems to me that we are facing four main challenges.

The first is the decline in attendance at Sunday Eucharist. That decline will make it more difficult to continue to provide quality Liturgy and will probably necessitate an evaluation of our current Mass schedule. Our Liturgy really is outstanding. Fr. Mike Welch, who took my place two Saturdays ago, was very complimentary.

The second challenge is financial. As of the end of January, our Sunday collections were running almost \$16,000 below budget. If that continues, it will be a major challenge to budget for next year and continue all of our ministries and services.

The third challenge is to maintain and strengthen our Catholic identity in the school with the growing non-Catholic population as well as to strengthen our evangelization to our non-Catholic students and families.

Finally, our facilities challenge this year is the rectory. Over the years, we have focused primarily on the church, the school, and parish center, which is as it should be. However, the rectory needs a new roof and a cooling system.

Stewardship Intention weekend will be February 23-24. On that weekend, please bring back your stewardship card and place it in the collection. You will notice that this year's stewardship card is different. This year we are separating the gifts of time and talent. Under the gift of time, please consider ways you can spend more time deepening your relationship with God. One of the most important ways in which we can be good stewards of time is by our presence and active participation at Eucharist every weekend.

My brothers and sisters, God has blessed us superabundantly. We give thanks to God by celebrating Sunday Eucharist and by our stewardship of time, talent, and treasure. Today I want to thank you for being good stewards of the gifts God has given you. Thank you for sharing them so generously with your parish and school.

Today I would also like to share some personal news with you. Last week I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. The good news is that it is contained within the prostate. I ask for your prayers now as I decide which treatment option to take and later as I go through the treatment.