

Thank you, Fr. Andy. Good Evening / Morning Folks.

The Stewardship Commission serves in an advisory role to Fr. Andy on Parish financial matters and the maintenance of our buildings and facilities. The Stewardship Commission has two main responsibilities:

- 1) The first is to develop and monitor the annual budget, provide periodic reports to the Parish and individual Commissions on financial matters, and ensure that the Parish complies with the financial management and reporting requirements established by the Diocese.
- 2) The second responsibility is the care and maintenance of our Church building, the Rectory, and the Catholic Student Center.

The other members of the Stewardship Commission are: Bob Brown; Bindy Curtis; Henry Marchi; and Pat Murphy. Diocesan guidelines encourage every Parish to report annually to its members on the financial state of the Parish. I am here now to present that report.

Most of you have heard me give this report for a number of years now. I usually tell you whether we ended the last Fiscal Year in the black or red, identify the sources of Income to the Parish and the things we spent money on. To be honest, things do not change a great deal from year-to-year. So, I'd like to talk about the Parish finances in a little different way today.

Let's just start by saying that I realize that many of us would prefer to not even hear a talk about money at a Mass. Instead, you may say, we should be talking about doing good works, providing a place for peaceful reflection, building a stronger Parish community, and helping those in need.

But how do these things happen? What does it take for the Food Pantry and the Faith Formation programs to be successful? What is needed before a Student Supper can take place? How is it that we hear beautiful music at Masses? What preparations are needed before a Baptism, First Communion or Confirmation can be celebrated? How is it that we can share in the joys of a wedding or collectively gain solace in such beautiful surroundings for a friend or loved one who has left us? These and other wonderful aspects of STM can only happen when we can bring together inspired people, ideas, a secure and welcoming space, and other resources. While the time and talents of our fellow Parishioners are an important part of this, so is money.

Recently, we heard at least two Gospels about Tax Collectors, and those guys are hardly ever portrayed in a good light. Each year at this time, I feel a little like a Tax Collector. STM does not tax its Parishioners, does not ask us to pay dues to belong, or make us feel we must "Pay to Pray". We are simply asked to give what we can to support the

programs and activities that mean the most to us. What we can do and how much we can do as a Parish really depends on us. The Stewardship Commission tries to support our brick and mortar existence and our programs with your offertory contributions, special donations, the CSO subsidy from the Diocese, and various targeted and general fundraisers. With the money we receive, we: pay the staff and provide their benefits; buy all of the supplies needed for the many programs, worship services and Sacramental celebrations; provide heat, light, computers and telephones to our three buildings; make repairs on our aging structures; and battle the detrimental effects of sun, snow and rain. We try to distribute the money we receive in a way that covers those costs that must absolutely be paid to keep the doors open and the lights on and still adequately provides for the other spiritual needs. Hard working, talented people can always do more good things when they have more resources to work with. It is hard when we cannot provide all of the funding that these good people request and deserve.

Because this is the Annual Report to the Parish, I am obliged to tell you we finished the last Fiscal Year that ended on June 30<sup>th</sup> about \$7,600 in the red. While we never like having a deficit, all things considered, it was not a bad year financially. I say this because of what the extra money was spent on, and because generous donations received the year before allowed us to replenish our savings which we used a little of to cover the deficit.

Let's talk about a few of the most significant reasons for the deficit. One big unexpected cost was the removal of the five huge pine trees on the Parish grounds. These trees were damaged and weakened and posed a real safety concern to people using the grounds and to our buildings should they have fallen in a storm. Taking these trees out cost \$9,700 (which all by itself was more than our entire deficit). The silver lining was that this area was made safe for Andrew Kelly's Eagle Scout project to beautify and enhance the reflection space by the Statue of Mary. This Eagle service project was funded by donations and did not cost the Parish anything more. Another very big ticket expense that started last year was putting new wiring in the CSC to allow us to replace our patchwork system of computers and software with an updated, reliable system, and allow us to add some better communications, safety and security measures to the CSC and Church buildings. We have invested just about \$10,000 so far on this critically needed and long overdue project and there is still more to buy and do. A final expense contributing to the deficit resulted from the fact that a large number of the fire extinguishers in our three buildings all exceeded their useful lives last year. Refilling or replacing them cost us \$1,380. Given these non-routine expenses, our \$7,600 deficit that we were comfortably able to cover from our rainy day savings was not so bad.

Teddy Roosevelt once said: "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." No words could be more applicable to our financial situation. We already know we will face financial challenges again this year. Our offertory donations are already down \$7,700 in this current Fiscal Year. Each week, the bulletin lists the average weekly collection needed to meet our annual offertory budget. So far for the first 17 weekends in this Fiscal Year, we have only covered this amount for one week. We also are about \$8,000 over budget for High School Youth Ministry and

our Sacramental programs. Because of the shift in the celebration of First Communion and Confirmation this year, we had a much larger group of students to support. This is certainly not a bad thing in any way, but it has resulted in more costs than usual.

What am I asking for? – only your help in the weeks and months ahead. Help when you can with you time, talents and yes, your money. Some things cannot be obtained or provided without money to spend. We understand that we have asked a lot from you in the past, and we are counting on your continued generous support again this year.

- Our 200 Club fundraiser is very active with about 90 members. While this number is below the original target of “200”, this fundraiser has brought in close to \$18,000 to the Parish in both of its first two years. Join in if you can and be eligible to win one of three monthly monetary prizes. Encourage a friend to participate as well!
- This year’s Matching Gift Campaign also is underway. We have received pledges of \$8,000 that we can collect if we can raise a matching amount dollar-for-dollar. We have already received \$2,140 of matching contributions from six donators. Contributions of any size are appreciated, and donating is easy. Simply write a check or initiate an electronic transfer to the “Church of St. Thomas More” and indicate in the memo field “Matching Gift Campaign”.
- The Christmas Fair is fast approaching on December 7<sup>th</sup>. In addition to the wonderful traditional features, there will be a Silent Auction for the first time this year with a lot of interesting items. Please volunteer to work at the Fair or attend. Either way, come and have some fun.
- You can also buy something directly that the Parish needs. Items are periodically listed in the bulletin under the “Sponsorship Program”. Your purchase of these items lowers our financial burden in a very direct and tangible way.

In addition, the Stewardship Commission has started to evaluate other new fundraisers to supplement our income and, hopefully in a way that also is fun and builds our sense of community. We are looking for opportunities and ideas that will be attractive to the broadest set of our Parishioners, our Faith Formation and UNH students, and our neighbors. You will hear more about these in the coming months. Let us know if you have fundraising ideas or would like to help.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide you with this financial report. More quantitative information about last year’s actual income and expenses and this year’s budget is available on a handout at the doors and will soon be posted on the STM web site. The Stewardship Commission remains committed to being good stewards of our money and facilities.

Thank you.