

STATE OF THE PARISH HOMILY ST JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH

June 30/July 1, 2018

As a pastor, it has been my custom every year to offer the parish that I am pastoring; what I entitle, *"The State of Parish Homily."* I usually choose the last weekend of June or the first weekend of July to deliver this report. Since this is my first year here, I am still learning about all of you at St. Joseph, so be patient with me as I deliver this annual report. This report includes where we are financially, as we end this fiscal year, our accomplishments this past year, and a little about what to expect for our next fiscal year.

THE NUMBERS:

The budget for this past fiscal year 2017-2018 ending June 30, 2018 we were projecting a deficit of **(\$6,200)** at St. Joseph. However, I am happy to say that we will end the year with a net income of about **\$48,000**. This was achieved by your generosity because our collections were better than projected and we kept our expenses in line. For our

new fiscal year which begins tomorrow (today), we are projecting a balanced budget. This is not including any income we will receive from OCA or the Latin Mass community which I will speak of in a few minutes in this homily. This past year we also completed several large projects that were approved by the Pastoral Advisory Council and the Financial Committee which totaled **\$757,174**. These projects include the new roof on this church, the raising of the old church, the painting of the parish hall and Grape Festival land improvements, which are currently going on. The monies used for these projects came from parish savings. Again, your generosity has made many good things happen here at the parish this past year and in the years to come.

THIS PAST YEAR:

I was named your pastor on September 1, 2017. If you can recall, in my first homily that I gave you, I told each of you that I, as well as my associates, were here to learn about the parish and no major decisions or changes would take place the first year. We also came at a difficult

time in the history of St. Joseph. You former pastor, Father Greg Hart will very ill and was dying. Add the stress of four new priests instead of one, it added to a very confusing time. However, despite everything that was going on last fall, we were able to move forward with projects. The Pastoral Advisory Council, in conjunction with the Finance Committee approved a **\$665,451** project to replace the roof of the church and to paint it inside and out. Soon after arriving here Father Michael Bass, my 3rd associate who was assigned to me to help with the additional 3 Masses here at St. Joseph including the Latin Mass, left as quickly as he arrived, leaving only 3 of us to cover both parishes.

At the same time Father Greg Hart was in grave condition, the Latin Mass community petitioned the bishop to allow them to start their own "Personal Parish." Working with the North American District Superior, Father Gerard Saguto of the Priestly Fraternity of St Peter, Bishop Taylor set in motion the ultimate request to allow the Latin Mass Community to have their own Church and community at some

point in the near future. It was agreed to that the FSSP priests from Tulsa would handle all of the spiritual needs of the community including weekly Mass, allowing them to begin the process of separation. The Latin Community would get to keep their weekly collection which began in November with the condition that they would pay for the priest who ministers to them and any musicians used during the Latin Mass.

On November 14, 2017, Father Greg Hart passed away. It was a very difficult time for our parish and many parishioners. There was a beautiful vigil as well as the first of two funerals was offered here at St Joseph for the repose of his soul.

On December 18th, our old church was raised. The tower remains as a reminder, and as I read these lines, a memorial committee which was established in January, has finalized their plans for how to establish a memorial on the grounds of the old church. I really look forward to

seeing how we can both honor our past as well have something for all of us to enjoy in the present.

Our annual spring events were successful. I got to see my first St. Joseph table, our Confirmation Mass as well as First Communion Mass were successful and we bid farewell to our Graduates this past May. We also painted the Parish Hall just in time for this year's Grape Festival. And as I speak, the Grape Festival improvements are happening to improve the Grape Festival experience for everyone.

As it has happened many years in the past, my associate pastors received their first assignments as administrators. That also means we get two new associates to get to know and I get to mentor. Father William and Father Ramsés are gone now, but Father Raj and Father Ramos are here to help me minister to the needs of St. Joseph. Make them feel welcome please.

THIS NEW YEAR AHEAD:

As we begin this new fiscal and complete year with you, we are looking at another **GRAPE FESTIVAL** in 5 weeks. To be honest, I am really looking forward to see how this event goes first hand. I plan to be here every day to part take in this wonderful tradition at St Joseph. I really want everyone to participate, volunteer and enjoy what makes St. Joseph in Tontitown so unique and wonderful.

OZARK CATHOLIC ACADEMY (OCA): In August, this Independent High School will open its doors with **21** students (As of 7.1.18). I am not sure if you are aware of this or not, but I am the bishop's Liaison. I am his ears as this school moves forward, but I am also your pastor which means I am here to protect your interests. Their schedule is yet to be determined, but their schedule will not affect any activities at St. Joseph. The rent the school is paying to the parish is not part of our new budget. They will be paying St. Joseph **\$45,000** in 2018-2019 of

which only **\$9,700** will be used for increase utility bills or maintenance expense; the remaining or **\$35,000** will be put into parish savings.

THE LATIN COMMUNITY: will continue to be with us for another year. Their superior has no FSSP priest to send to this community thus far, so the *status quo* will remain in effect for this new fiscal year. The FSSP priest in Tulsa will still minister to the needs of the community with occasional help from a FSSP in Cabot. The only change is starting today, July 1st, they will pay a \$200 each weekend and on Holy Days that there is Latin Mass at St. Joseph. This will total about **\$10,400** which will be placed in parish savings along with the OCA rent. This weekly space rental is designed to encourage the Latin Community to find a space for their Masses and is a “just” amount which will benefit St. Joseph parish for the use of our church.

Currently, our Building Committee, Finance committee and Pastoral Advisory Council are looking at a lot of ***PROJECTS*** that are needed here at St. Joseph. Each of these projects has an expense

attached, so they have to be placed in order and done accordingly. Two projects that are priorities are a new storage facility for our Grape Festival for related supplies such as tables and chairs which are currently stored in the parish hall. Secondly, we need a new space for our Food Pantry. Since we have very a dedicated group of volunteers and this is a new and important outreach ministry here at the parish, it is important to provide an adequate space for them to work. The original closet in the hall was too small and the stage is unsafe and needed for other activities. After we build a new storage facility for the Grape Festival supplies, there will be room to construct a new food pantry in the parish hall for this ministry. Both of these projects will cost money, but need to be done; hopefully in this new fiscal year.

We have two other projects that will help enhance security on the campus. One is improved lighting around the grounds for the safety at night time, especially for our adorers at our adoration Chapel and for the children and their families at OCA. The other is to secure our doors

to our facilities by installing a key fob system which will allow us to track those entering our facilities and to easily change the codes as needed.

The elephant in the room is our old school building. When I first arrived I had a tour of the building. It is in remarkable shape, but still needs a lot of maintenance to prevent it from deteriorating to the point that it will have to be raised like the old church. There are many possible uses, other than storage, in the future. It will probably cost about \$20,000 a year to maintain it and prevent deterioration and about a million dollars plus to bring it up to the condition of our Office/Education Center. That is a lot of money to spend to maintain it or to bring it up to code if we have no use for it. I plan to form a committee to come up with a plan for this old school so we will have a guide to follow in the years ahead. Right now, it is doing nothing but sitting there.

One project that is ongoing is that the City of Fayetteville wants an easement on the extreme east side of our property for an eventual new water pipeline. The details are yet to be settled on, but this could

lead the parish to receive some compensation for granting the easement either now or in the future. I will keep you updated.

THE RECTORY AT TONTITOWN: Since the three of us live at the rectory in Springdale, I asked our bishop if I could sell the rectory at Tontitown and put the money in savings until a future pastor who is assigned only to St. Joseph could purchase a rectory closer to Tontitown, but he denied my request. So, we will keep the rectory and maintain it. I will allow Father Rajasekhar to cook his Indian dishes there so it will not always be empty; we can also use it for overflow guests when we do not have enough space at the Springdale rectory.

By now, most of you know that I love **CHRISTMAS**. I look forward to helping the ladies who decorate the Church with designing a new look for this upcoming Christmas.

I plan to provide St. Joseph with two documents that I believe will help couples planning to marry and families planning to bury a family member. The **Wedding Guide** will help couples who are planning a wedding at St. Joseph which will review our policies as well as how to

prepare for a Wedding Mass including all the readings and prayers for the Mass or service. The ***Funeral Guide*** which is more a help in preparing a funeral for a beloved, provides the church's teaching on death, reading options, prayers for the dying and guide to preparing a Funeral Mass. Both of these documents will be ready by years end and will be available in .pdf form on our webpage.

I would like to try something new here at St Joseph that works very well at St Raphael. In the early part of next year I would to do a stewardship fair weekend where everyone will have the opportunity after the Masses to see all the good things that are happening at St Joseph and have an opportunity to volunteer or sign up such as for the Grape Festival, a catechist, lector, choir member and all groups and ministries here at St Joseph at one time and one place.

Effective this week, at St. Joseph in Tontitown and St. Raphael in Springdale, the confession and Mass schedule of both parishes will be posted in each parish bulletin. You will see in St. Raphael's bulletin the schedule for St. Joseph in Tontitown and vice versa. My reason for this

is when my associates are out of town. (I've also learned after 12 associates, they go away much more than your pastor!!), I do not want to run around trying to cover so many Masses. This will allow me to cancel a few Masses here and there when they are both out of town and you will still be able to go to Mass either here at St. Joseph or at St. Raphael in Springdale.

I am also going to increase my office hours at St. Joseph. You will now be able to make an appointment with me on Friday afternoons in addition to Monday afternoons and Thursday mornings at St. Joseph. Of course, you are free to make an appointment with me at my St. Raphael office as well.

Our new 2018-2019 budget allows for the hiring of a **PARISH SECRETARY**. I have felt since I have arrived here at St. Joseph that the office was missing a person. Paul Scouten, our business manager and David Burkemper, our Director of Religious Education should be focused on their main jobs and not be doing a lot of tasks that an

administrative assistant can do. The job description is now available in the bulletin and I am actively seeking to fill this position before summer's end. (Labor Day)

I have dropped more than a few hints over the past 8 months about the **LOCATION OF OUR TABERNACLE** here at St. Joseph. I have no real preference to where it should be located. Unlike many priests, it's no biggie to me. That said, this church was designed with a beautiful glass cornered chapel to display the tabernacle both in the body of the church and the chapel at the same time. Now it sits on what is nothing more than an old typewriter stand and an unstable stand at that. If it moves back to the chapel, nothing really has to be done other than to move it. If it is to remain behind the altar, we must make a few decisions. If we find a more appropriate altar, there is not enough room to genuflect with the current step configuration. If it is to be put on a shelf or built into the wall, do you really want to put in on a back wall that is made of paneling? Something to think about. If you have suggestions or thoughts. Let me know.

IN CONCLUSION:

As I complete my first fiscal year here with you all, I continue to make this promise to you: I am here for you; Father Rajasekhar and Father Ramos are here for you. There will always be many changes as our parish moves forward on its journey of faith, but I remain committed as your pastor. I have loved my time here and look forward to the celebrations and events ahead of us. I believe our best days are ahead of us and I believe that our Lord is with us always.

I want to thank my wonderful staff. I am truly blessed to have each and every one of you working for our parish. Thank you. I would also like to thank all of you that have volunteered in some way in our parish. Thank you.

I realize that I am not in control of events or what will happen in the future; our Heavenly Father is. For that I am eternally grateful because I am only His servant. I place our parish in His hands every night and pray for each and every one of you. Our complete financial report with

actual figures for this past fiscal year and our new budget figures for this new fiscal year will be available in the bulletin in July or August.

This will include details on all monies spent on the various projects and the income from Grape Festival 2017 and account balances. A copy of this State of the Parish report is available on our webpage on Monday, July 2nd, and you may request a hard copy from Paul at the parish office. Thank you for your support and may God bless our parish and our families. To Him be the glory forever. Amen