

Fr. Black's Annual Report to the Parish

Given as homily during Masses during weekend of September 15-16

As I begin this report, I wish to thank all of you for your support and prayers in the past year. It has been a great year for us as a parish. Our faith formation programs are growing stronger and stronger. This past Sunday night we filled the church with 500 parishioners for a presentation from Chris Padgett on prayer and our spiritual lives. Everyone seemed to truly enjoy his presentation and I look forward to similar opportunities such as this in the future. An important aspect of parish life is our financial health. While it is always the spiritual self that matters most, our financial strength provides the resources that then give us the ability to achieve our spiritual goals. In today's bulletin we have a financial report of our past fiscal year. I won't spend a lot of time on this because there is a lot to get to, but I think it is important to provide this information to you annually. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact me or our business manager, Marcy Rolph, in the parish office. I just want to say how grateful I am to all of you for your generosity. Our parish continues to grow: last year we registered 228 families and are now over 4,000 families. Your financial offerings have increased by 15% over just the past 3 years.

One of the challenges we continue to face is a shortage of space, which I will address specifically later. I am grateful for the patience and cooperative spirit of our many groups, at last count almost 60. You can imagine the complexity of scheduling a space for meetings or events. Of course, in the big picture, this is a good challenge to have. It shows that your generosity of time and talent likewise continues to grow. Our groups have been able to cooperate with one another to find a solution to many scheduling conflicts. For the cases where limits prevented an easy solution, we have established a priority of concerns that has helped us with unresolved scheduling conflicts. In order of priority, we have established the following list:

Liturgy and Sacraments

Funerals and Bereavement Meals

Sacramental Preparation

Youth and Adult Faith Formation

Ministries

Notice that Sacraments are our first priority. It has been my goal to ensure that when a parish Mass is being celebrated, nothing else should conflict with this opportunity for worship. I know that this has been a challenge for some of our programming, but I appreciate the flexibility that has been offered for this priority. One of the changes as a result of this is the re-imagining of our preschool program. We are now meeting with our preschoolers and their parents before the 10:45 and 12:30 masses on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. We are calling this our Young Disciples ministry. I had the pleasure of teaching those sessions last weekend and thoroughly enjoyed my time with them.

We will also begin offering a youth-oriented homily at the 9 and 10:45 Masses on the first and third Sundays of each month from October through May. We will invite families to sit in the front of our middle two sections of pews and the homilist will come down to interact with the children. While the content of this homily will be directed to the children, it is our hope that all present will benefit from our reflections.

Another change you may have noticed is that there are fewer announcements at the end of Mass. We are trying to keep the focus on the Mass and are thus reserving this time for immediately necessary information such as parish gatherings following Mass, reminders of a Holy Day in the coming week, or other necessary information. Groups will continue to have information available on tables in the Narthex, so please take notice of those tables as you enter and leave the church. We are exploring social media options, but for the time being, the parish bulletin will remain our primary source of publicity for upcoming events and programming. So please be sure to take one home with you each week.

A couple years ago I embarked on a restructuring of our parish staff and organizations. Most noted changes were the establishment of a chart of organizations with their respective staff directors and a shift from Parish Council to a Parish Steering Committee. Our Organizational Chart places every group, whether they be 5 or 50 members, with a staff director who is there to assist them in whatever way they can. A copy of this chart will be in next week's bulletin. This chart also established a clear line of communication – as each group has been asked to share their meeting minutes as well as any concerns they may have with their director. All this information is shared commonly with staff and parish volunteer chairs of all of our groups. It is from these minutes that we establish the agenda for our Parish Steering Committee. This committee, which includes 12 parishioner volunteers, (this number will increase as we are gradually including representatives from other parish organizations) forms my main body of consultation as I make decisions for our parish. We will be publishing the minutes of our Steering Committee meetings on our website as well as in the bulletin.

Coordinating these directors is a new position called Mission Director. This role is being filled by Paul Davis, who meets regularly with our directors, both individually and collectively, to help them in their mission. While Paul is often doing the heavy work of Mission Director, he and I meet weekly to ensure everything he does is in my name and ensures my vision for our parish. This vision is guided by our parish Mission Statement printed on the front of every bulletin.

As many of you have anticipated, we are now at the point of making the move to expand our current physical facilities. As you know, when Bishop Campbell assigned me to St. Joan of Arc, he gave me the charge to assess the needs of the parish and to expand the facilities. As mentioned before, the needs have grown even more than the Bishop and I had expected. When I returned to Bishop Campbell about a year ago, he gave me permission to address the current needs of our parish, with an eye to future growth. Our current needs include more meeting space, office space, classrooms, an expansion of our Social Hall and a dedicated Youth Space. So I have recently called upon a group of parishioners to form a Master Planning committee. They have worked with some building and planning experts to come up with what we think is a plan to address our current needs. Of course this is the first step in the process that will continue to require much advice and consultation. Input opportunities will be an important part of this process and all will have the opportunity to provide feedback. This coming Tuesday, September 18, marks the 30th Anniversary of the groundbreaking of our church. We would like to embrace this parish milestone by inviting all of you to attend our usually scheduled 6:15 p.m. Mass this Tuesday, which will be a special mass for the anniversary of a church. Mass will be followed by a light reception and a presentation of our plans, complete with artistic renditions of this project. Present will also be a representative from a group specializing in Capital Campaigns for Catholic parishes who will present to us how everyone will have the opportunity to give their input on our project.

Thank you for your time. Know that I commit myself completely, though sometimes imperfectly, to the spiritual welfare of each of you. My goal is to point all of our efforts to the common good of helping our parishioners grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus Christ. I now invoke the intercession of our Patroness, St. Joan of Arc pray for us, now and forever. Amen.