

**FR. BLACK'S REPORT TO PARISH
NOVEMBER 10, 2019**

St. Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians is a rather brief letter of just three chapters. In this letter, St. Paul encourages the community of Thessalonica to persevere in their faith and in their daily lives. The first sentence of today's reading from that letter reflects Paul's sincere care for the community. He says:

"Brothers and sisters: May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting encouragement and good hope through his grace, encourage your hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word."

If I were to poll our parish clergy and clergy around our diocese, I suspect they would concur with me that it is in this spirit that each of us prepares our homilies week after week. Encouraging our communities in their daily lives, reminding them of God's love and our continued support as we all strive to remain faithful to the Lord.

As I have done in years past, today I will be presenting to you our annual report, including our financial report for last year, our budget for next year and several significant events within our parish life. I shared the above reflection on St. Paul as perhaps a personal justification, but hopefully more of an introduction that, as pastor, when I make this report, it is not just a matter of fact report, but a means of encouragement and direction for us as a parish community. The text of this homily will be printed in next week's bulletin so you don't have to try to remember each detail.

We will start with the financial report and then move onto more exciting things! We publish this report each year for transparency of the good stewardship of your generosity as well as an honest report of our opportunities and challenges.

I would like to point out 3 portions of this report. The first is the "statement of activity." These are "the numbers." The bottom line is that we ended the year in a deficit of \$74,000. Like your home budgets, we look at our income and our expenses to determine how we arrived at these numbers. I have reviewed these numbers with the Diocese and they have assured us that all parishes have experienced a drop in offertory this year in our diocese and across the country. Historically, offertory for parishes have been fluctuating within a 10% range year to year, which is also the case of our offertory. This leads me to the second point, our budget for next year. Our parish is blessed with a very dedicated and experienced Finance Council who have put together a budget that will challenge us to track our income and expenses in order to end next year with a surplus. On the subject of reporting, there has been some confusion regarding our weekly report of offertory giving. The reporting of income is a straightforward, accurate reporting of all offertory income. It is the budgeted goal at the top of this square each week that has caused some confusion. This was meant to establish a weekly goal for offertory. This figure was the entire budget of offertory, divided by 52 weeks. This gives us an average weekly need. As you know, our Christmas and Easter collections are well above the other 50 weeks of the year, yet they are reflected in the weekly budget. So beginning this weekend, we have taken those two larger collections out of the calculation and established an average need for the other 50 weeks. This gives us a more accurate need week to week.

The third portion of our report I would like to highlight is the pie charts that describe a proportional representation of our income and expenses. These are accompanied by a description of each category. I encourage you to review this report and if you have any questions please contact the parish office. Thank you for enduring this report especially those who aren't a numbers person. However, it is important that this information is given to you in this forum on an annual basis. One last financial matter, we have reached and passed our BAA goal this year of \$263,460.96 by \$3,289.42. So we will be receiving those funds as a refund to the parish. Thank you for your support of the work of the diocese.

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Fr. Black's Report to Parish, November 10, 2019, Continued

It has been our goal this year to improve communication among our many organizations, as well as to all parishioners. Our Parish Steering Committee has had a successful year in providing good communication as well as being a good advisory council to me, as pastor, on a number of important issues. We have enlisted the services of Flocknote in order to reach, not only our active parishioners, but those who are less active as well. This has been an evangelization goal of ours over the past couple years. Flocknote provides spiritual inspiration, an invitation to upcoming parish activities and is an efficient line of communication in the event we need to get word to everyone in a short period of time. One example is that everyone almost received a notice last weekend when we were without water for several hours Saturday evening due to some work on the lines by the water company. Fortunately supply was restored that evening.

All parishioners also should have received information regarding an important transition from our St. Vincent de Paul Society to St. Teresa Outreach as the main outreach to the poor and those in need. I wish to personally thank the leadership of St. Vincent de Paul for their many years of dedicated service. I would also like to recognize their support and cooperation in helping us to make this transition, as well as the many volunteers who have been faithful to this ministry. We have received as a response the support of over 100 volunteers who have voiced their continued support as we move to St. Theresa Outreach. Deacon Steve Petrill and Deacon Candidate Jim Elchert have agreed to oversee the transition of this important outreach. So look forward to further information from them as we move forward. Such things as our Christmas Tree donation project, 5th Sunday collections, sandwich making and the many other works of charity will continue. Our goal is to ensure the work of St. Vincent de Paul continues uninterrupted.

Last, and certainly not least, is our Capital Campaign. We have been planning for several years to address the growing need for space here at St. Joan of Arc. This past year, those plans have become more concrete. You have seen renderings of our proposed project and have offered us some helpful suggestions. We have hired a campaign firm, Guidance in Giving, who specialize in capital campaigns for Catholic churches across the county. Much work has already begun, including the formation of some needed committees and some initial fundraising. I will be back here at the ambo in early January to announce the beginning of the parish wide campaign, including opportunities to learn about the project and opportunities to support our efforts.

I would like to thank our adult and youth faith formation staffs for providing another year of amazing opportunities for our parishioners of all ages to grow in their faith. It is my dream that what we have been able to do with such limited space, will only continue to grow with some added facilities! I would also like to thank our parish staff, who are a wonderful group of dedicated faithful who are willing to do anything, at any time, to serve our parish. Finally, our countless volunteers who, likewise, not only serve, but serve with a smile! We couldn't do the many things we do, without you. On this note, I would like to share a wonderful experience from just a couple weeks ago. A woman came to me in the narthex after the 10:45 mass and said, "My husband and I are visitors and we noticed a spirit about your congregation that we have never seen. From the moment we arrived in the parking lot we saw so many people coming together with a look of joy on their faces. As we came into church, this feeling continued. We felt it from the welcome we received, to the sincerity of prayer, to the beautiful singing from the choir and congregation. We truly knew that we had worshipped God here." So know that the little and the big things we do as a parish are noticed and appreciated. This is why I feel so blessed to be here at St. Joan of Arc.