

St. Kilian Parish Stewardship (September 2016- September 2017)

"I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now." (Philippians 1. 3-5)

This past June 2017, I reported on the strong progress we have made as a parish in bringing to life our Mission Statement and the five pillars of the Vision Statement (Hospitality, Liturgy and Eucharist, Lifelong Faith Formation, Stewardship, and Parish Social Ministry). I summarized (see my pastor's page in the archives on our website) the results of the year's end Evaluation Meeting of the Pastoral Council and Pastoral Team.

Rather than restate our accomplishments in this Stewardship Report, I would like to report on our financial condition and the development of our Pastoral Plan concerning our Buildings and Grounds; what we might call the parish campus.

The four buildings that we have: school, church, rectory and administration, and parish social ministry (outreach), are testimonies to the financial sacrifices and deep love for Christ of St. Kilian parishioners through the years. The school building on Cherry Street was dedicated in 1963. Thousands of our parish children were educated there by the sisters of St. Dominic and lay teachers. They received an excellent education that worked in harmony with the Catholic values and principles and teachings that they learned in their homes. For decades, Catholic elementary schools in the diocese were impacted by ever-increasing education costs, rising tuition, women religious aging and declining in numbers, and falling enrollment. To meet this challenge, the diocese encouraged the formation of regional Catholic elementary schools.

During the pastorate of Msgr. Charles Swiger, the parish school of St. Kilian became LaSalle Regional School encompassing the children of our own parish, and three neighboring parishes whose elementary schools were closed. In spite of this creative response to falling enrollment and spiraling costs, LaSalle Regional was unable to continue, along with many other parish and regional elementary schools on Long Island. It was closed by the diocese in June 2012.

The closing of LaSalle Regional caused great emotional hardship to parishioners. You grieved the loss of an era of parish Catholic elementary education on our grounds. My predecessor, Msgr. Michael Flynn, quickly began efforts to rent or lease the closed school building. His hope, which I share, was that another Catholic school might open, or failing that a school for children with disabilities.

The cost of maintaining and operating the largely unused building has been a tremendous strain on the parish budget. Maintenance alone each year is in the \$176,000 range. Major repairs can happen at any time. The school roof is near the end of its life in the 60-year-old building (est. \$500,000-600,000). The two boilers from 1963 are well past their lifespan and highly inefficient. We still require the building and the gymnasium for the religious education of our parish children after their day in public school, for CYO, our parish parties/fundraisers and other important parish apostolates and ministry activities. More than five years of concerted efforts to find a renter or lessor have been unsuccessful.

As I reported last year (Stewardship Report 2015-2016), just maintaining each of our parish buildings is very costly. In addition to maintenance, our parish buildings are in need of extensive repairs. We have only \$650,000 in parish reserves. A new roof on our rectory (badly needed, we have had water in priests' bedrooms!) is estimated to cost \$200,000. The bathrooms are not handicapped accessible in both school and rectory. There is no handicapped ramp or elevator. In other words, the school and the rectory do not comply with the Disabilities Act. Windows are mostly single pane and inefficient. Doors are in need of replacement. The fire systems need to be upgraded. Old pipes that bring in water to our school need to be replaced. Some contamination of the drinking water in the school water fountains was found recently and had to be corrected.

Addressing these essential repairs of our school building will easily cost \$4 million (deBruin AIA). In fact, turning the rectory (a much smaller structure) into a top condition building, meeting all the code requirements and renovating it completely, will cost \$1.5 to \$2 million according to a recent architectural study we paid for by deBruin.

We simply do not have the funds to renovate our aging buildings. Our newest building is the church, renovated in 1997. Twenty years have passed, and that building too is in need of ongoing repairs. We have limited parish reserves (\$650, 000) and annual offertory income that is not keeping up with expenses. Extensive renovation to our buildings is needed. The Pastoral Team, Finance Committee, and the Pastoral Council realized that St. Kilian parish does not have financial resources to fund the Mission of the gospel. We cannot meet our goals and objectives listed in the parish Vision Statement.

Weekly offertory is averaging about \$20,000 – about \$10 per person per week. We need \$15 per person per week to keep up with maintenance and repairs. Please keep our parish financially strong! Prayerfully consider increasing \$5 per week in your offering – beginning right away.

The issue of aging infrastructure is a common one in our diocese. In February 2016 the Diocese of Rockville Centre notified all pastors that they had permission to seek buyers of their parish properties, and not only renters. I reported this to our Pastoral Council when I was notified of this new development, seeking their advice and recommendations. The Pastoral Team and the Finance Committee also entered the conversation.

The commercial real estate broker that we hired (cf. my stewardship report of 2015-2016), Mr. Gus Nuzzolese of Colliers real estate, began to advertise our school as available for sale or rent. A nearby private school was interested, a school for children with disabilities, as were many other parties who desired to build apartments, or townhomes.

Any sale of property, the diocese made clear, needed the approval of the people of the parish, the bishop of the diocese, and New York State. If the sale is over \$3 million, the approval of the Vatican. At monthly meetings, the Pastoral Council and the Finance Committee have been regularly discussing the development of a Pastoral Plan for our parish buildings.

Mr. Nuzzolese has received many inquiries, and continues to receive them on purchase of parish property. Of course, any offer that we receive on the purchase of our closed school building must include our parish use of it after school hours, and on weekends for parish ministries of various kinds. This can be accomplished by what is called a “leaseback arrangement”. One very

interested school has offered us \$4.8 million for purchase of the school building. We could then lease the building and gymnasium from them for our parish activities and ministries.

In addition to offers on our school building, a developer has made a cash offer of \$4.25 million for our Rectory/Administrative building (1.5 acres). With the proceeds, we could build a new rectory/administrative building/lower-level classrooms on the property between the church and the school.

Three pastoral planning meetings for parish leadership were held in October. On October 16th, October 23rd, and October 30th, parish leaders (parishioners from our Pastoral Council, Stewardship Committee, Pastoral Team, Deacons, Finance Committee, Church History Committee, Spirituality Committee, Family Life Committee, and Liturgy Committee - prayed together, heard from our Business Manager about our financial condition, listened to important data from our commercial real estate broker and an architectural firm (deBruin AIA), and brainstormed options for our parish to pursue in order to address our dire financial situation, and our decaying buildings.

The results of those sessions and the prayerful deliberations of many in our parish leadership will be published. An Open Parish Meeting will also be held with opportunity for interested parishioners to hear the results firsthand – and contribute your thoughts. You can reach me or the Pastoral Council on our email accounts.

- 1. How can we meet the future still vibrant as a faith community?*
- 2. How can we consolidate our parish buildings on a renewed parish campus?*
- 3. How can we stabilize our future so that all parish programs will continue to thrive?*
- 4. How can we make sure that the needs of all our parishioners will be met?*
- 5. How can we achieve the goals and objectives contained in the five pillars of our Mission Statement?*

Let us call on the Holy Spirit to discern the will of God for our parish. With the Lord all challenges can be met. Let us go forth with courage and trust in God!

“Now to Him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Paul to the Ephesians 3:20-21)

Peace, Father Bruce Powers