

STATE OF THE PARISH HOMILY ST RAPHAEL CATHOLIC CHURCH

June 22/23, 2019

As it is my custom every June or July, I offer you my annual report on the status of our parish. As always, 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. Before going into the details of this homily, know that this past fiscal year was yet another challenging year for us with lots of twists and turns which have affected almost every aspect of this annual report.

THE NUMBERS:

I start off with good news. We are projected to end this current fiscal year with a small deficit of about \$10,000 which is not bad on a million-dollar plus budget. However, the budget for this new fiscal year which begins in July projects a \$43,300 deficit. The reason is three-fold. First, our cost of having sisters back in our parish will be \$18,000 this upcoming year. Secondly, as the minimum wage increases, we had to adjust our salaries to be fair to our employees. Finally, we have the normal increase for the cost of running a parish. I ask you especially this year to consider increasing your weekly contributions to close the deficit. The sisters will be a blessing to our parish and our parish staff

works hard to provide the services necessary to run our parish, so be generous.

Our building collections continues to be very good. We continue to receive monthly what is necessary to pay our loans to the diocese. We made 4 extra payments this year. As of June 30th, the balance of our construction loan is **\$495,561**. I can say with certainty that if our collections continue as they have, we will have this loan paid off by December of 2020. Again, thank you for your continued support and generosity.

THIS PAST YEAR'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This past year began with receiving two new associates. Both Father Ramos and Father Raj have been a blessing to our parish. Like so many associates that came before them, they had added to the beauty of our parish. Father Raj blessed so many families by blessing their homes and Father Ramos has begun to put together manuals for all the special celebrations we celebrate year-round for future associates to use as a guide. Our wedding and funeral guides are now readily available on our webpage. I am waiting on the Baptism guide for further guidelines from the diocese as well as a new rite of baptism from the US bishops before undertaking this document. Jonathan Ramirez has continued to update our webpage to make it easier to

navigate. Our Guardian Angel program is once again protecting our young people at the 8:30am and 12:30pm Sunday Masses thanks to the Charismatic renewal group.

We had very successful fundraisers and parish gatherings over the year. Summerfest went well, as well as Brewtober Chilifest. This year we had our biannual Stewardship Fair in February. It was well attended, but we are looking at another way to give our groups and organizations opportunities to promote their ministries. The STEP (Stop to Eat Program on First Fridays) has been very successful and will continue in in this new fiscal year.

As all of you know by now, I was named the Vicar General of the Diocese of Little Rock by Bishop Taylor. I am happy to serve him in this capacity and to be his personal representative in NWA. This position has required a lot of trips to Little Rock and more administrative tasks. In addition, I am on a team of mentoring pastors. I have written two guides; one for mentoring pastors and one for first time administrators/pastors to help them in their ministries. For these reasons, I am blessed to have Father Ramos who will spend another year with us and our new associate, Father Jon Miskin who just arrived with us. I am blessed to have them and a great staff who can pick up extra work in my absence and with my other duties.

THIS UPCOMING YEAR

This year, Summer Fest will be held on Sunday, August 18th. The event will remain the same as it has been in the past; for families of all ages with games, food, music, hay rides and helicopter rides, but no alcohol.

Our Sixth annual Brewtober Chilifest is set for Saturday, October 26th. Like years past this event is for adults 21 and older and will feature Craft Beer sampling, live music, a silent auction, homemade chili and bratwurst. Awards will be given to both the best beer entry and chili entry.

Guadalupe celebrations, Posadas and Via Crucis will continue under the leadership of Father Ramos who has done such a great job with these ministries.

You will see soccer returning to the parish grounds. This is different than in years past. St Raphael is not sponsoring the league, but simply allowing the Manchester Soccer Club to use our field for practice and a few games. They oversee everything and any parent who wishes their child to join this league, call the office and we will give you their number.

We are in the early stages of rethinking our Stewardship Fair. We are thinking of allowing one group a month to promote their ministry. The first three weekends of the month would be promotion by in the bulletin, trumpet and pulpit announcements. The 4th weekend would be promotion and sign ups in the vestibule. We are hoping to start this ministry in August.

NEW MINISTRY

In the early part of this year, I mentioned that we applied for a grant to bring religious sisters back into our parish. The Diocese did receive the grant from Catholic Extension Society, and we will be receiving three religious sisters later this year. The “Missionaries of Charity of Mary Immaculate” from Mexico City will send two sisters from Mexico and one sister from Guatemala. It is a 5-year grant. They will live in the rectory in Tontitown and their ministry will be in our youth house. Their mission while here at St Raphael will be “Human Development Services.” I will explain in detail this ministry in the months ahead, but they will not be involved in the formation program in the parish but rather be helping young woman ages 12-22 and their families in time of crisis. The Bishop and I will meet the Mother Superior in early July. The three sisters will have a 9-week in culturalization course in San Antonio and then will begin their ministry in early November.

MY DREAM LIST

We are looking into a Video Projection Control system. It would be a good addition to our church and will work right alongside our new sound system. We are hoping to have a demonstration very soon. It is a little pricey at \$55,000 and will require an employee so if you would like to see this happen, you can donate to this fund. I am also wanting an LED sign on 412. I have received a generous donation from our Woman's Council and have started to get bids for the project. The cost will be around \$30,000. If you are interested in helping us promote our parish to the community, please donate to this fund.

I still dream of a "*Cappuccino Corner.*" outside our Book and Gift Shop and having wood paneling on all the walls like we have in our Narthex in areas of heavy traffic. I have said this for a few years now, but it is still a dream.

IN CONCLUSION:

As I complete my tenth fiscal year here with you all, I continue to make this promise to you: I am here for you; Father Ramos and Father Miskin 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 love this parish and what it stands for. As I said before, I am not going anywhere because I believe in each of you and what we can do together. 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.

As I say every year, as your pastor, 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. A copy of this State of the Parish report is available on our webpage now and a link will be sent out in next week's Trumpet. Thank you for your support and may God bless our parish and our families. To Him be the glory forever. Amen