

BLESSED SACRAMENT



CHURCH

TO PRAISE, TO BLESS, TO PREACH

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we join together again this Advent to prayerfully *Choose This Day whom we will serve*, I invite you to look back at the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Book of Joshua from which this phrase is taken. Together may we marvel at God's goodness as He led the chosen people on their journey to the Promised Land! Indeed, before Joshua asks the Israelites to renew their commitment to the Lord, he reminds them of the Lord's faithfulness and goodness through trial upon trial (see Joshua 24:1-15).

It is a moment not unlike our own. I marvel at the goodness of God who leads us through this season of Advent to His Son. And I trust in the faithfulness of God as I ask you to renew your financial commitment to this parish, your spiritual home, as part of our *Choose This Day* stewardship drive. Despite all the troubles and difficulties, we face, the Lord is near, and He is faithful!

As it relates to difficulties, our parish is indeed facing some financial challenges. Our cash flow at Blessed Sacrament is very tight. As I've noted before, this has been true for some time, but we have hit a particularly intense crunch this fall. So much so that in October we were not able to write the check for the friars' salaries to our Dominican community. They have since been paid, but it was a sobering moment as we saw our finances tighten even more. And that's why I want to update you today on what we've been doing and where we're going.

#### *Why are we here?*

The Finance Council and I have worked hard to ensure the financial stability of our parish, but our cash flow has been very tight for some years. Always the Lord has provided what we needed, often through your ongoing generosity, sometimes through an extraordinary gift that has helped us through tight spots.

As we budgeted for this fiscal year 2018-2019, we noticed a significant increase in giving from the previous year and planned for that increase to continue somewhat. In line with that increase and trusting in this continued support, the Finance Council and our staff prepared a reasonable budget.

However, since the beginning of the fiscal year in July, we have seen a flattening of our collections, rather than the expected increase. The Finance Council and I have looked at our expenses through November, and they are in line with last

year or even less than last year, though we have spent more on forming our children by starting the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program and by paying a full-time Parochial Vicar (this was not the case last year). Naturally, both expenses are worthy and add immensely to the spiritual nourishment of our parish.

Regardless, in October, our cash flow tightened significantly because of several sizeable expenses due that month. In addition to paying school subsidies to nearby Catholic schools to facilitate our children receiving a Catholic education, we also had a large property tax bill. Moreover, the Archdiocesan salary cycle fell such that we had 3 payrolls in that month rather than two. At the end of the month, we just didn't have any cash left to pay the Dominican salaries. Though, as I mentioned before, they have since been paid.

### *What are we doing moving forward?*

The Finance Council and I pledge our ongoing commitment to responsibly manage the finances of Blessed Sacrament. In keeping with that responsibility and looking to strengthen our financial footing, we have committed to the following changes.

- (1) **Reporting:** We will add a monthly report on our cash flow so that you will have a better sense of where we are as a parish. We will indicate how much money we received for our ongoing operating expenses (from collections or other sources) and how much money we paid out.
- (2) **Trimming:** Though our budget is already tight, we will continue to look at ways of spending even less. For example:
  - a. We will defer some repairs and ongoing maintenance work until we have more funds (e.g. repairing the unusable sink in the bathroom in our office);
  - b. We will seek (and already are seeking) outside donors to sponsor our once-monthly Choral Masses which have been such a success, but are an added expense; and
  - c. We will continue to analyze our office expenses to look for ways to save each month.
- (3) **Budgeting:** As we look to prepare the budget for next fiscal year this spring, we will:
  - a. limit our increase for discretionary expenses to 5% or less
  - b. budget conservative increases in income

- c. have an independent review of our proposed budget to make sure it is reasonable.
- (4) **Availability:** Parish finances are transparent and open to you for review at any time, and our entire team is happy to answer questions. Mr. Brian Reisenauer, the Chair of our Finance Council, invites you to call him with any questions or concerns. To reach him, simply call 206.778.2929 and leave a message. Of course, you may always reach out to Debbie Gonzalez, our Parish Administrator, or me as well.

*How can you help?*

**Please pray, volunteer and considering increasing your financial support of the parish. Even the smallest of increases can make a difference.**

Thus, I ask you once again to *Choose This Day*, because it is through your support that we have the means to radiate the joy of the Gospel in a spiritually and intellectually impoverished world.

- If you are already giving regularly, would you consider increasing your gift by \$25 a month? I recognize this may be more than some of you can give. Know that every gift of every size is appreciated!
- If you are not already a regular giver, would you consider giving \$25 a month to support your spiritual home and help us serve others? And please consider doing so by becoming a monthly electronic donor at [www.blessed-sacrament.org/choose](http://www.blessed-sacrament.org/choose) or by calling Debbie at 206.547.3020.
- I would also ask you to consider giving a special one-time Christmas gift so that Blessed Sacrament might enter the new year on strong financial footing. We estimate that we are approximately \$93,000 behind this year on income and pray your Christmas gift can help us close that gap. These funds will be used for everything from maintenance work, programming and buying supplies, to paying utilities and more – all core needs of the parish.

As you choose what to do, please consider that the Finance Council and I would be greatly aided in our efforts to make a budget and responsibly prepare for the various needs of the parish if you would consider a recurring monthly gift through our Electronic Giving Portal.

Such gifts are easy for you to manage and make it much easier for us to project our cash flow month to month. Go to [www.blessed-sacrament.org/choose](http://www.blessed-sacrament.org/choose), to make such a gift or call Debbie Gonzalez at 206.547.3020 to set it up.

Thank you for your tremendous generosity in prayer, time, and resources. I pledge to you that the Finance Council and I will continue to seek ways to streamline our operating expenses. Please help us by considering what you can do to start (or increase) your financial support of Blessed Sacrament.

At the end of the day, everything we do is so that this parish may radiate the joy of the Gospel and help bring souls to Christ. Your assistance makes that possible. Thank you!

May the anticipation of our Savior's birth bring you joy and peace.

In Christ and St. Dominic,

Fr. John Marie Bingham, O.P.

P.S. I will continue to keep you and the parish updated on the status of our budget in the coming months. I'm very grateful for your prayerful consideration in making a special Christmas gift, and starting (or increasing) your monthly electronic giving, if you haven't already.

More information on electronic giving can be found at [www.blessed-sacrament.org/choose](http://www.blessed-sacrament.org/choose) or by calling Debbie Gonzalez at 206.547.3020. God bless you!