

Good morning. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Tony Morris and I currently serve as chairperson of the Pastoral Council. Father Osang Idagbo has graciously allowed me a few minutes before mass, to provide you with a "State of the Parish" address if you will. We typically provide an annual statement in the August / September time frame that primarily deals with the finances of the parish and we will do that again this year. There are some items that we judged we needed to share with you now, rather than waiting until then.

Ss Peter and Paul parish continues to be a growing parish both in size and in the work being done by several ministries. We have many active adult ministries in our parish, a youth ministry group and both our Parish School of Religion and Ss Peter & Paul School are doing outstanding work. We are very blessed to have two wonderful priests and a deacon. As a parish, we are very blessed indeed.

Yet as with any growing family, our needs continue to grow as well. There are areas that we have not addressed as well as we would like due to lack of funding or lack of volunteers. Most of you are aware that we had a Youth Coordinator on staff a couple of years ago. This is a position that was eliminated due to lack of finances. Many of the responsibilities associated with this position have been spread amongst various individuals. This includes a very dedicated group of people that make up our Youth Ministry commission. They are doing a wonderful job, but they have had very few new volunteers to assist them over the last couple of years.

There is work that needs to be done in our cemeteries. In the near future, we will have some work days, one of which will require several volunteers to put in underground drain pipes in order to alleviate a drainage problem that has developed. Watch the bulletin for more details on this.

Ss Peter and Paul School continues to look for ways to increase fund raising in order to minimize tuition increases. BINGO was started late last year. While start up was slow, BINGO has shown a profit over the last few weeks. We are hopeful that it will continue in this mode.

Hopefully you are aware of our plans to deal with our shortage of meeting space and to replace the aging trailers used by the school. We are awaiting a final report from Cosgriff, the firm that conducted the feasibility study to see if there is financial support to implement that program.

And then there is the carpet in our church. We have put it off as long as we can, but we need to replace the carpeting this year. The work is planned to be completed this summer. Again, we will need some volunteers to move pews during this project, but the installation of the carpeting will be done by professionals. We are in the process of getting final bids, but we expect the cost to be in the neighborhood of \$40,000. We will be initiating a special collection in the next few weeks for this project. We are happy to share with you that an anonymous donor has agreed to match dollar for dollar up to \$20,000 for the new carpeting. Again, we are very blessed. You will get more information on this very soon.

In the midst of all of this, we have restarted our Stewardship Committee. We have chosen to embrace the definition of Stewardship as defined by the United States Council of Catholic Bishops. That definition is that Stewardship is not simply making donations or taking care of the building and grounds.

It is a spirituality—hence a way of life—made of four parts:

Receiving the gifts of God with gratitude

Cultivating them responsibly

Sharing them lovingly in justice with others

Standing before the Lord in a spirit of accountability

I was really taken by that definition, especially the final sentence; To stand before the Lord in a spirit of accountability. What a powerful statement. Again, you will be hearing more about the Stewardship committees work in the near future, but one of their first goals is to expand the focus of our current prayer chain beyond praying for those that are ill or need medical attention to also include praying for specific needs within our parish, our diocese and our world.

As I mentioned earlier, we will be providing an annual financial summary later in the year, but I do want to update you on a few things. I am happy to report that at this point in time we are slightly ahead of our annual budgeted income target. This is primarily comprised of our Sunday collection and fundraisers like the picnic and wurstmarkt. Our fiscal year ends June 30th so we still have a way to go, but this is a good thing and we thank all of you for generosity of time,

talent and treasure throughout this past year. The bad news is that last year, the budget was approved projecting a loss of about \$25,000 and are we are also tracking to hit that target as well. We began the year with enough cash to weather this loss, but it is not something that we can continue to do. We just completed the budget process for the upcoming fiscal year. We are projecting an increase in income of less than 2% and a loss of \$25,000 is once again projected. Just like last year, we are faced with the decision to either cut services to balance the budget or to work to raise income. As mentioned earlier, we have many ministries that are being served and others that we would like to expand. We decided not to cut any services for the upcoming fiscal year at this time. We wanted to share with you where we are at and, in essence, let you make the decision. The \$25,000 loss that I mentioned earlier, while significant, is not that difficult to make up over a year. It's \$500 more per week in the collection basket. That's about a \$1 per current contributing family per week. If we were fortunate enough to have each family increase their Sunday donation by \$5 per week, we would be able to address some issues that we currently cannot deal with. Of course we realize that in today's environment many of our parishioners are in a position where any increase would be difficult. But we also realize that other families are not. When was the last time that you increased your Sunday donation? Where can a family find \$5 or \$10 more per week to donate to the church? For my family, it's eating out one less night per month. It's ordering water at meals when we do eat out rather than a soda or other beverage. It's not going to a movie one night, but staying at home and playing a game as a family, which has other great benefits.

I am not here to tell anyone what they should do. That has always been and will always be a personal decision. Our church welcomes all. I am simple sharing facts about the parish and hopefully giving you some ideas of other ways you can help out if you choose. We will continue to watch our financial situation closely as we cannot continue to operate in a deficit indefinitely. I assure you that we will cut expenses and services before we allow the parish to get into a negative cash position. We are hopeful that it does not come to that. I am confident that it won't. Time and time again my family and I have witnessed and personally experienced the generosity of this parish when there is a need. We are proud to be part of this faith community that is working to further the kingdom of God. Please feel free to contact me or any member of the various councils or Father Osang Idagbo with any questions or ideas. I thank you for your time and attention.