

CHALLENGES #7

This is the seventh in a series of short essays designed to illuminate and promote discussion of important issues regarding the state of our parish.

In early 2013, members of St. John's Finance Council began to explore some crucial financial and spiritual challenges facing St. John's with parishioners in a series of six **Challenges** letters. Father Jason has asked us to resume the **Challenges** series, examining the relationship between our budget and faith formation issues with parishioners in order to facilitate communication and enable all to participate in the planning for our parish's future. We are hopeful that the information provided and questions raised in **Challenges** will promote discussion among parishioners and lead to feedback that will enable us to overcome the challenges our parish faces in the forthcoming months and years. This letter briefly reviews the budget, discusses efforts to reduce expenses, and presents suggestions which promise to enhance our parish's revenues.

First, a quick review of our parish finances. This weekend Finance Council Chair, Greg Webb, reported that fiscal year 2013-14 ended June 30 with a \$78,000 deficit. The deficit was "paid for" by unspent money from our maintenance collections and interest income. This is an undesirable situation and cannot be sustained. It is the goal of the Finance Council to eliminate that deficit in this and future years without impacting our spiritual and community life.

Changes have been made to cut costs. First, upon recommendation of the Council, St John's has cut the parish's contribution to Notre Dame School by \$10,000. Second, St John's requested that the Diocese not replace Father Manuel Ponce after his departure in June. While we lost one full clergy position, our costs only fell by 40% of the salary and insurance costs for a third priest because the Newman Center had been paying for 60% these costs. The Newman Center no longer contributes to clergy costs because of the administrative changes that have taken place there. However, despite these cost reductions, the budget for our present year (2014-15) projects a deficit of \$70,000. Other budget items are essential to the continuation of basic parish services and further cuts would seriously impact our parish operations.

So, what can we, the parishioners, do to help? First, if you are not registered, please complete a registration form. That is the first step to put your spiritual energy into action. Next, we can sign up for electronic giving. There are some among us who have little or no online experience and never will. If that is not you, please give serious consideration to giving electronically. Please call the church office if you need assistance with the sign-up process. See the bulletin flyer for further information. Also, consider St. John's in your will or trust. We will provide more information about this option at a later date. Last, we are asking those who contribute sparingly to increase their weekly or monthly giving.

The table below provides some striking information about the pattern of giving at St. John's. The data include contributions from households using envelopes and/or online giving. Cash contributions from unidentified mass-goers are excluded. In category 1, 29% of households contributed only 2% of the annual giving total, an average of \$43 annually or 83¢ per week. In the next range, 35% of households contributed just 13% of total annual contributions, averaging \$287 per year or \$5.51 per week.

What would happen to our annual contributions if the 29% of households in category 1, who now contribute 83¢ per week, increase their donations to \$5 per week? Our annual giving total would increase by \$28,000. What if the 35% of households in category 2, who now contribute an average of \$5.51 a week, increase their contributions to \$10 per week? That would raise our annual parish giving by \$36,000. Finally, if those in category 3 raised their weekly contributions from \$13.96 to \$20 per week, our contributions would rise by an additional \$23,000. That means that if households in categories 1, 2, and 3 increased their contributions to the new levels, annual giving would increase by \$87,500! Our 2014-15 projected budget deficit would be eliminated.

Levels of Giving for St. John’s Households Using Envelopes or Giving Online 2013-14

Giving Category	% of Total Households	% of Total Giving	Average Yearly Contribution	Average Weekly Contribution
1. \$0 - \$100	29.0%	2.0%	\$43	\$0.83
2. \$100 - \$500	35.0%	13.0%	\$287	\$5.51
3. \$500 - \$1,000	16.0%	15.0%	\$726	\$13.96
4. \$1,000 - \$3,000	16.0%	35.0%	\$1,729	\$33.24
5. >\$3,000	4.0%	35.0%	\$6,100	\$117.31

*All contributions to the weekly offertory are included. Any cash contributions from unidentified mass-goers are not included.

We should also note that in category 6, the highest range of giving, 4% of parishioners contribute 35% of total yearly contributions to St. John’s. Those in the two highest giving categories constitute 20% of parish households and are responsible for 70% of parish donations.

Increased contributions from all levels of givers will be greatly welcomed. However, we are aware that only a handful of parishioners bear a disproportionate burden in supporting our parish and we are profoundly grateful for their overwhelming generosity. We are also aware that there are a number of households in the lowest giving ranges who are not financially able to increase their giving. But it is also true that many can. We **challenge** you to help us eliminate this deficit. We ask those who do not share in the responsibility for our parish’s financial well-being to do so. Working together, each doing our part, will enable our parish to flourish and do great things in His name.

We encourage you to contact us with your comments and suggestions.

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For it is in giving that we receive...

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

