



Pastor's Office

January, 2011

My Dear Parishioners,

This year I have purposefully scheduled our annual stewardship commitment period to take place in the Lenten season. As we contemplate the sacrifice Jesus made for us, we should as well consider the personal sacrifice we will make to God for the welfare of our parish community.

At St. Bridget Parish we are committed to nurture the spiritual growth of our parishioners of all ages, to provide a beautiful and inspiring place for our worship, to provide our children with an excellent Catholic education, and to reach beyond our own walls to aid those less fortunate in our community. To continue this commitment we must come together to put our parish on stronger financial footing. This will only happen with meaningful sacrificial giving on the part of every parishioner of St. Bridget Church.

Over the next few weeks I will share with you through the bulletins and other communications the financial position of the parish. Simply put, St. Bridget Parish is financially challenged. Yes, we keep the lights and the heat on, but we are at the most vulnerable financial position we have been in many years. While we are good stewards of our financial resources, our needs and commitments continue to mount, and our challenges have become more urgent.

- Only one third of our registered parishioners made a financial pledge to St. Bridget Church in the last Annual Stewardship Commitment Campaign
- Just 60 percent of our parishioners have any record of giving to the parish over the past year
- Over the past two years, the number of pledges made has decreased 16 percent, and the amount pledged decreased by 12 percent
- Over the past decade, the number of parish families making a pledge has decreased by 33 percent
- This past year, for parishioners that made a pledge, the average amount pledged was approximately \$24/week in contributions; the actual amount contributed on pledges was about \$18/week; the amount of giving across all parishioners was \$10.50 per week
- 23 percent of pledges by parishioners went unfulfilled last year – over \$322,000 was not received by St. Bridget Church

In 2011, we need to begin to address our challenges. Of utmost importance is our upcoming Annual Stewardship Commitment Campaign.

What I Will Ask of Every St. Bridget Parishioner

In our Annual Stewardship Commitment campaign I will ask you to make a financial promise to God based on all that God gives you. I ask of you only what God asks of us. God gives us all we have and all we are. God in turn asks and expects us to be generous and to offer a meaningful portion of our resources to Him for His work on earth. Our gifts of resources must represent the best we have to offer, not what we have left over. They must come from the top, not from the bottom. Most likely you are generous to many good causes. I pray you will keep doing that, giving to your special charities and causes. However, God's Church must come first, for it is here that you worship Him, here that you grow in the Spirit, and here that we receive His grace. Our parish gives us so much and needs our sacrifice in return.

It is essential that our promise to God be a matter of sacrifice, that we consider Our Blessed Lord's sacrifice for us and make a "Return to the Lord for all He has done for us." Sacrifice hurts a little, and makes us think about what is really important. Please ponder your decision in prayer, focus on this, and make your sacrifice pleasing God.

Our Annual Stewardship Commitment Campaign

Our Annual Stewardship Commitment Campaign will unfold over the next few months as such:

- This month, in addition to this letter, you will hear more about the needs of our parish, and about the Annual Stewardship Commitment Campaign, so that you are fully prepared to respond. Please look to the bulletins each week, to The Bridge, and to emails from St. Bridget Church.
- In February, I will speak at several Masses about sacrificial giving, about the financial position of our parish, and about the upcoming Annual Stewardship Commitment Campaign. Soon after that, I will send home a letter requesting every St. Bridget parishioner to make their financial pledge to the parish, and to begin their contributions on that pledge. A pledge card will be included in the letter.
- In March, parishioners may complete their pledge as part of our Masses during the month. We will do this in a manner that is respectful of our worship, and that does not take too much time. Though I would prefer not to have to do this, our recent experience with the diocesan annual appeal tells us that many of our parishioners chose to respond to the request to complete their pledge while present in church. I ask for your patience in March as we include this in our weekend liturgies.
- In March and April, your fellow parishioners will make phone calls to all parishioners from whom we have not yet heard or received a pledge. We will also visit with those parishioners that would like to personally discuss their pledge. I am available to meet with any parishioner at the rectory, or in your home, to discuss your annual pledge and the needs of the parish.

Please pray for our St. Bridget parish community and for me as your pastor. I pray each day for you and our blessed parish family. And, I pray for and give thanks to the Lord for the generosity and sacrificial giving to our St. Bridget parish community.

Your servant in Christ,



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