

WE LEAD PEOPLE  
TO JESUS THROUGH...

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*Dear Friends...* Praised be Jesus Christ!

*“And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and behold, a voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:16-17)*

As you read this report, I invite you to think back on your baptism. For many of us it is a day we do not remember, so we have to use our imagination. While we might not have heard a voice from heaven, indeed God has said to each of us that we are His beloved sons and daughters. In this moment, for Jesus, His identity was solidified. Did Jesus need to be baptized? No. But He did so in order that the waters of baptism might be opened for us and that we too will come to know our true identity as beloved sons and daughters of God.

This past year we have focused on this truth through preaching, intercessory prayer, Holy Hours, and Encounter School of Ministry. We are very intentionally understanding our true identity as beloved sons and daughters of God because that is the foundation of discipleship. To know that not only intellectually, but also in our hearts, allows us to be more on fire with the Holy Spirit. In order to help others understand their true identity, we need to understand it first for ourselves. The world will tell us many lies but this is Gospel Truth.

As you page through the report you will find many blessings. You will see a strong financial footing, beautiful prayer, outreach to our brothers and sisters, and so much more. This report is a brief summary of how our parish has cooperated in building the Kingdom of God here in our corner of the vineyard. All of which is done by virtue of our baptism, becoming adopted children of God, His beloved sons and daughters.

This past year also saw my installation as your pastor. What an honor, privilege, and blessing to be the thirty-fifth pastor of St. Mary Parish. This is a faith community that truly seeks to serve Christ through Word, Sacrament, and Service. It is such a joy for me to shepherd you into whatever God has in store for us. It is exciting to talk about the future and see so many disciples on fire with faith. Let us be sure to keep that flame of faith alive in our hearts, the flame that was first given to us at our baptism.

Finally, I wish to offer my gratitude to the staff, ministers, and all those who witness to Jesus Christ on a daily basis. A particular word of thanks to Daniel Hansen, Director of Administrative Services, Mayra Moreno Garcia, Parish Accountant, our Parish Trustees, and members of our Finance Council who have prepared this report. May God continue to bless us abundantly!

Our Lady of the Assumption... pray for us!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Aaron R. Laskiewicz, Pastor

## DISCIPLESHIP (FORMERLY CATHOLIC FORMATION)

The National Eucharistic Revival gained momentum in 2023-24 as the focus moved to the parish level. St. Mary centered on the Eucharist in several ways: continued weekly Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, October parish mission, Bishop Barron's book: *This is My Body*, and *Emmaus 90* small-group study. In August we launched a monthly offering called *Magnify*, an evening of Adoration accompanied by spirit-filled worship music and a witness talk. In June we coordinated a segment of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage in which over 150 individuals processed with the Eucharist from St. John the Evangelist to St. Mary. Over 300 people gathered for Adoration and Benediction before processing to St. Alphonsus. The route to St. Mary was one of four nationwide that came together in Indianapolis in July for the week-long National Eucharistic Congress.



Established this year was our new Discipleship Commission, made up of parish members who meet regularly to support and guide our Discipleship Team in responding to the needs of the community. With the commission's guidance we welcomed Jess Panlener to our team to work with children in Kindergarten through Grade 5 and their families, along with preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Jess has also spearheaded the development of family formation. Twice per month families gather at the parish for formation where they share a meal and participate in a faith-centered learning activity together. There is also time for age-level breakout sessions for children while adults share time together without the children.

On the middle and high school levels, Youth and Young Adult Coordinator, Julianne Elouadih incorporated the *Life Teen* model as a way for teens to encounter Christ in a special way. An amazing core team of adults serves as small group leaders for our youth, meeting them where they are and helping them grow closer to Jesus Christ and His Church. In addition to ongoing faith sharing, numerous retreats, service opportunities, and devotional practices were offered for adolescents as well as the opportunity to prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

## HUMAN CONCERNS

The Human Concerns Commission added a new Ministry partnership this year! We were introduced to **Kinship Community Food Center** by parishioner Pam Lownik. After Masses this Lent, Kinship's executive director and community interns presented opportunities of engaging volunteers *and* neighborhood residents to end hunger, isolation, and poverty. Parishioners who have engaged at the center report a tremendous sense of connection: "Everyone has a gift to give, everyone has a gift to receive."

The Commission has continued to coordinate reach-out with the parish's established ministry partners: our sister parish in Haiti, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Nia Imani Family, Inc., Repairers of the Breach, Pathfinders, St. Ben's (Capuchin Community Services), the Women's Support Center of Milwaukee, and Franciscan Peacemakers. Our parish school children also remained involved with their grade-assigned ministry partners.

Fr. Bellegarde, pastor of our sister parish in Latiboliere, Haiti was able to visit here for Mission Weekend in September. Our collection that weekend funded teachers' salaries, health care, and food for people in the village. Our prayers continue and we hope for their safety, and we rejoice that the gangs have not overrun their village.

Our other collections over the rest of the year have reminded us just how generous this congregation is! St. Vincent de Paul's food pantry has been well-stocked to meet the needs of people in our neighborhood, as well as to help supply six food pantries and meal sites in the inner city. Additionally, our Vincentians provide other assistance to the poor in crisis in our area. The Circle of Love Christmas project increased the gifts given to ministry partners and the needy in our parish by 22% over last year. On Lenten weekends, parishioners provided most-needed items and monetary donations of \$3000-to-\$5000 to our six featured ministry partners. In January the Respect Life Committee hosted the Archdiocesan Respect Life Mass and reception, featuring area-wide respect life organizations. The Committee continues to use the baby bottle campaign to support the work of the Women's Support Center of Milwaukee.





## LITURGY



The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is where everything begins. Every aspect of our parish finds its meaning in the Mass. Why? Because, as the Second Vatican Council states, the Eucharist is the “source and summit of all Christian life” (SC, 47). What a joy it is to pray together as a vibrant worshipping community every weekend. Highlights in our liturgy and music ministry this year include the return of a Children’s Choir that sang on Christmas Eve, and the reintroduction of distributing both the Body and the Blood of Christ for the first time since the pandemic. The Holy Spirit is alive in our many other prayer opportunities like *Be Still and Know*, May Crowning, Corpus Christi Procession, and Divine Mercy Holy Hour; the devotional part of prayer shines through as many people spent time with Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration.

## PASTORAL CARE

Marked by humility, simplicity, friendship and joy, we encounter God’s people through acts of mercy and love always remembering that we try continually to serve God through prayer, reception of the sacraments, and the kinship with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our four ministries include Communion, Sacrament of Anointing, Funeral, and Intercessory Prayer with fifty-eight ministers serving in one or more of them. We also have a robust Prayer Shawl Ministry which bolsters all four ministries.

Ministers take Communion to the communities in assisted living and rehabilitation facilities and hospitals, as well as to many homebound parishioners who are unable to join us for Mass. Each first Saturday of the month, after 4:00 pm Mass, the Presider offers the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick supported by our Pastoral Care Ministers; on average about twenty people have been anointed each month. Individual anointings are also offered by priests of St. Mary Parish. Our funeral ministry is profoundly important as families gather to respectfully lay their loved ones to rest. Reestablished this past year, a Grief Support Group is helping to guide and educate loved ones through the seasons of grief, and our Mass of Remembrance was celebrated by over 100 people. The Intercessory Prayer ministry helps to support parishioners who find themselves carrying heavy burdens; throughout the year, approximately three times per month, we offer opportunities for those who seek supportive prayer.

## ST. MARY PARISH SCHOOL

- The Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation has awarded St. Mary Parish School, Hales Corners, the highest standards of excellence required of all members of WRISA and is fully accredited by the association.
- Awarded Exemplary Recognition by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee in the areas of *Mission and Catholic Identity; Academic Excellence; and Mission, Community, and Climate*.
- Recognized as a *Project Lead the Way* distinguished school six years in a row. This honor is given to a select number of elementary schools across the U.S.
- 70% of current staff had or now have their own children attend St. Mary Parish School.
- 96% of our 8th grade students perform AT OR ABOVE grade level in Reading on the MAP\* tests.
- 85% of our middle school students perform AT OR ABOVE grade level in Math on the MAP\* tests.
- 97% of our 8th grade students are proficient or advanced on the national ACRE\*\* test.
- Our one-to-one Chromebooks for all middle school students complement the rigorous instructional program we provide.

\* Measure of Academic Progress

\*\* Assessment of Children in Religious Education



## ANNUAL REPORT - JUNE 30, 2024

We are blessed to report our fifth year in a row of balanced budgets, having achieved a small operating surplus of \$72,149 - a little over 1% revenue - for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2024. The Finance Council has also approved and submitted another break-even budget for the fiscal year of July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. With your continued support, we hope to maintain this healthy financial trend into the future. We are deeply grateful for all of the sacrifices our parishioners make that allow us to minister daily in Liturgy, School, and Discipleship. Our primary mission remains bringing people closer to the Lord through Word, Sacrament and Service, and once again you have made that possible.

Operating revenue was stronger than in past years. Tuition collections benefited from strong school enrollment. That combined with successful fundraising efforts offset a lack of growth in our monthly contributions. Tuition collections and monthly contributions remain our largest two sources of revenue. As previously reported, both are impacted by external economic forces experienced by all St. Mary families like rising prices and slow wage growth. They are also subject to internal forces like the rate of growth in our congregation and school, and the multitude of other things competing with families' ability to make contributions and pay tuition. We're blessed to have had a strong year in 2024.

On the expense side, spending exceeded that of last year's. There were no vacancies in our staff in 2024 allowing us to operate at full strength. We are subject to the same inflationary pressures as our parishioners, so various expenses exceeded our plans. Outside of maintenance issues described below, we managed these increases to within an appropriate margin.

Revenue and expense were skewed a bit by the heating system breakdown, the fundraising effort to offset our out-of-pocket portion, and the insurance claim. The total project cost was \$340K of which insurance is expected to cover \$240K. Through the incredible generosity of the parish and school, we raised the difference allowing us to upgrade ten classroom heaters and add a glycol system to our boilers to prevent anything like this from ever happening again. A few lingering items need to be resolved in fall, but through your generosity, the project has been successfully completed.

**Additional Notes:** These statements are inclusive of the operating income and expense which is budgeted to break even. Significant non-operating events (monies raised for specific one-time projects, capital campaigns, and support to others) are reported here to avoid skewing our operating results. The largest non-operating event in fiscal 2023 and 2024 remains the *Love One Another Campaign* and the projects we've been able to complete, including the replacement of the phone system, the upper parking lot renovation, and the updating of meeting Room 312. These capital improvements are all intended to help the Parish and School grow in the future. The next round of projects under the *Love One Another Campaign* will include addressing the sound system requirements within the church and upgrading our website. Our community also provided \$35,645 of support to our Sister Parish in Haiti and we collected \$88,074 toward our Building Repair Fund where we hope to make further investments in the condition of our campus to reduce our operating cost and significantly improve the worship and education experience of our parish families.

<b>REVENUE</b>		
	6/30/2023	6/30/2024
Parish School Revenue	\$1,775,379	\$2,132,565
Liturgy and Music	25,223	24,332
Discipleship (Catholic Formation)	39,205	41,505
Outreach / Human Concerns	1,797	250
General Parish Revenue		
Monthly Envelopes	1,735,673	1,742,523
Sunday Offertory	119,924	126,202
Debt Retirement		
Endowment Revenue		67,297
Bequests	237	
Haiti Income		
Parish Festival	90,000	110,275
All Other Parish Revenue	93,653	96,443
Total Parish Revenue	\$2,105,711	\$2,208,827
<b>TOTAL REVENUE PARISH AND SCHOOL</b>	<b>\$3,881,090</b>	<b>4,341,392</b>

<b>EXPENSE</b>		
	6/30/2023	6/30/2024
Parish School Expense	\$2,620,666	3,018,626
Liturgy and Music	149,312	188,941
Catholic Formation	279,367	280,726
Outreach / Human Concerns	1,252	564
General Parish Expense		
Archdiocesan Assessment	134,364	133,957
Haiti Program		
Debt Repayment		
Interest Expense		
Endowment Expense		
Office, Building, Grounds, Admin	657,485	646,429
Total Parish Expense	\$1,221,780	1,250,617
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE PARISH AND SCHOOL</b>	<b>\$3,842,446</b>	<b>\$4,269,243</b>
<b>SURPLUS OR (DEFICIT)</b>	<b>\$38,644</b>	<b>\$72,149</b>