

My name is Chris Henwood.

We just heard Dan walk us through the financial picture of our Parish. I am sure that many of you are wondering what this all means and how does it affect you?

A few weeks ago one of the readings during the Mass was about the Body of Christ and how each of us makes up a part of that Body. The readings told us that when one part of the Body was hurting, the whole Body would also be hurting and that every part of the Body of Christ needed all of the other parts in order to be whole.

Here at St. Marks we have our own part of the Body of Christ and each of us is a vital part of that Body. And together we make up the family of St. Marks.

I say that we are a family because we all brothers and sisters in Christ and right now our family is hurting. So that everyone understands how this works; each Parish is basically its own independent family and as such must provide for its own needs. I guess a common impression might be that the Catholic Church is just rolling in dough and that money is never a problem, if any Parish runs short of cash, it can just pick up the phone and call Rome and they will send over some of the needed funds. I assure you that it does not work that way. Each Parish is responsible for its own expenses and has financial obligations to the Diocese as well. This is just how it is for each of our own families. I know in these financially difficult times, I did not get a bailout, and there is no bail out coming for our parish. It is up to each of us, the members of this family to carry the load.

Now for the bottom line: We are here to inform every family in the Parish of just exactly what our financial situation is. This is informational and also an appeal to each of you for help. At our current rate of expenses and what we are taking in from collections, we are running a deficit that is being covered by our decreasing fund reserves. In order for us to reverse that trend we need to take a first step.

Father Joe puts in the bulletin every week what our baseline needs are for the week's collection. Our immediate goal is to start to reach and exceed that number each week.

How do we get there? Currently, we have 370 active families here at St. Marks. Of the 370 families, around 150 families, which is about 40% of the families in the Parish, provide 80% of donations St. Marks receives on a regular basis. The remaining 60% of the families provide about 20% of the donations. Broken down very simply, if each family could increase their current donations by \$15-\$20 per week, we would start to turn this trend around.

Additionally, there are some steps each family could take that would also help our Parish family out greatly. Father Joe has already asked each of us to go out and invite someone we know to join us here at St. Marks. It does not have to be a hard sell, but a simple invitation. And when you do it, share with them something you like about being a member of the St. Marks family

Another way to help out is to utilize the online giving that is available. I know there are some weeks when I am out of town at a hockey or soccer tournament and our envelope does not make it into the basket. I always mean to catch up the next week, but I will admit that I sometimes forget. I do almost everything else online; I have to make it a point to do this as well. I ask each of you to do the same.

And finally, we have the supermarket cards. This is a painless way for the parish to make money and for each of us to contribute. The cards are on sale each week and 5% of what is sold goes right into the church and you get the total face value of the cards you purchase to use at all of the local grocery stores. In preparing for this talk, I ran some of the numbers with Dan and Fr. Joe regarding the supermarket card program. If you are a family that spends \$300/week on food, you are spending roughly \$15,600/year on food. If 150 families from St. Marks who each spend \$300/week, that would be a total of \$2,340,000! If all 150 families bought supermarket cards for their grocery purchases and the church gets 5% of the total sold, it would bring in \$117,000!!! This is a totally painless way to increase your giving for the church.

Father Joe is also doing his part in all this by trimming expenses and reducing costs here at the Parish wherever he can.

In the past several weeks Father Joe sent out a letter to every family registered in the Parish asking them to renew their commitment to their Parish family here at St. Marks. Thanks to all of you here today, last week for the first time in many months, we came close to reaching our baseline number in the collection. THANK YOU!

I know that in these uncertain economic times, asking for more money out of everyone is a difficult proposition. What we would ask each family to do today is go home and discuss it among your individual families and pray about it. We are only asking that each family look at their own commitment to their Parish Family here at St. Marks and to renew that commitment to the degree that they are able. The St. Marks family needs each of its members to make the entire Body of Christ here at St. Marks a financially healthy one.

THANK YOU