St. Paul Catholic Church

1410 Pine Street  Silverton, OR  97381

August 6th, 2017

The Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We hear in the words of Peter to Jesus this weekend in Matthew’s gospel, “Lord, it is good for us to be here.” Indeed, we could echo these words of Peter for ourselves here at St. Paul – it is good for us to be here. I share in these words too, having now completed one year as your parochial Administrator and now continuing this year – it has and continues to be good for me to be with you in this parish community! As I did last year, it is my desire to continue to offer to the parish each year a sort of “state-of-the-parish” address. This present letter is meant to communicate to the whole parish a brief reflection on the previous year’s work and to offer some direction for the upcoming year. The five primary areas of focus in this address will be: finance, personnel, the narthex project, religious education, and marriage.

1. **Finance**

The Finance Council has the primary responsibility of advising the pastor as to the administration of the temporal goods of the parish. I am happy to report that the Finance Council and I continue to have a good relationship and meet monthly to examine our monthly financial reports and discuss issues pertaining to personnel, building and maintenance, and other pertinent projects. I am very grateful to every member of the Finance Council for their continued service and wise counsel.

Overall, I am very pleased to report that the finances of St. Paul have performed very well last year. Total offertory income increased almost $15,000 from the previous year to total $371,616.79. Total income was $442,208.42. Overall income increased from the ’15-’16 FY to the ’16-’17 FY by $52,949.76. Expenses were much lower during the ’16-’17 FY, totaling $335,287.79. Overall, the parish experienced a net income surplus of $106,920.63. This is excellent news for the financial performance of the parish income and expenses. The cautionary note here is that this was in large part due to a shortage of staff and personnel. As you will recall, no replacement hire was made last FY for the vacancies of Youth Minister and Director of Religious Education, and our Hispanic Ministries Coordinator departed at the end of February. In short, this generous surplus should not be expected for the coming year as we have now hired a new, full-time DRE & Youth Minister, and other hires can be expected.

The parish budget for current ’17-’18 FY was completed in April. Overall, the budget projects total income at $430,000 and total expenses at $472,000. As the budget was prepared, a number of areas were discussed for increased spending, including maintenance and facilities, retreat and youth programs, religious education, staffing, and workshops/retreats. All of these areas were increased significantly to expand our services to the parishes and improve our physical plant. In essence, the budget subcommittee of the Finance Council and I crafted the “dream budget” where all of our expected needs were met. It is my intention to match spending with income as closely as possible over the year so as to not run a deficit. The current budget projects a $42,000 deficit without increased offertory or other sources of revenue to offset it.

Parish annual pledge card giving is available in this weekend’s bulletin. This was done in the past, but hasn’t been available for the past few years. Please take the commitment card home and discuss it with your family as to what you can give for your offertory pledge for the FY. Note: this is for your offertory giving only and is different and separate from any Narthex pledges. The pledge cards are rough estimates to giving based on income categories and annual commitments for tithing based on 3% and 5%, as well as current offertory contributions and increases. I would ask that families please prayerfully consider giving within the 3-5% of income range. I was very pleased to see that giving generally increased this past year and I hope this is a trend that continues into the future.

St. Paul is currently transitioning our on-line giving from ParishPay to eCatholic, which is the same company that currently hosts the parish website. The advantages to the switch is that more money is saved with less fees. Volunteers and staff will be available after all Masses the weekend of August 19th and 20th to help switch over current ParishPay users to the new eCatholic online giving. I want to HIGHLY encourage parishioners to use online giving as their preferred method of tithing. More and more studies have shown that parishes who use online giving show greater offertory income over the course of the year. There are many advantages to online giving and I would ask that parishioners seriously consider online giving weekly, monthly, or annually. More information and directions for online giving can be found at the parish website: <http://stpaulsilverton.com/online-giving>. You may also contact the office for more information.

1. **Personnel**

We have been fortunate to have recently hired a new full-time Director of Religious Education & Youth Ministry, Mr. Christian Spencer. If you haven’t yet had an opportunity to meet Chris, I would encourage you to do so. He is a delight to have on staff and is very open to speaking with you to hear your hopes and aspirations for our youth and religious education programs. Chris has really taken to his new position with enthusiasm and zeal for our young people and I am confident the parish and our religious education and youth programs will be well tended to under his care.

Since last year, the parish has also added to its staff a new part-time bookkeeper, Mrs. Teresa Davi. Teresa has been a capable help to me and the Finance Council in arranging our accounting practices and reports.

An area that has been previously discussed has been our need to hire a maintenance staff member. As of now, we currently have two part-time employees to manage our janitorial needs. I am pleased to announce that effective September 1st, St. Paul will be opening a new three-quarters time with benefits position for handling our janitorial and maintenance needs. This will condense our two present janitor positions into the position of Facilities Manager. It is the hope that this new hire will serve the parish’s needs well.

After a suitable candidate has been hired as Facilities Manager, and the Finance Council and I have had a chance to review income and expenditures for a few months following, we will examine the feasibility of hiring a replacement for the position of Hispanic Ministries Coordinator. I can’t say for certain when this will be. There are many factors that will affect when a hire can be made: how the income and expenses are performing after a new Facilities Manager is found, how long it takes to find the right Facilities Manager, and then, after opening the Hispanic Ministries position, how long it takes to find a suitable candidate. I am firm in believing that there is a real and important need to have our Hispanic parishioners well-served and I am dedicated to doing so. However, prudence informs that it is better to move surely and slowly with staffing hires than quickly.

The bottom line is that I want the right people, for the right position, at the right time. While it may take us a while to get all the staffing positions settled, I wanted to let the parish know the direction we are heading.

1. **The Narthex Project**

One of the largest accomplishments of the past year has been the construction and completion of the Narthex project. The Narthex project is more or less finished now. There are a few loose ends that need to be tied up: completion of landscaping around the Narthex and the raingarden, completion of the steeple tower, installation of a bike rack, etc. Overall, I have been immensely pleased with Dalke Construction and their professionalism and work.

Financially, the Narthex project is on a solid footing. Before we began fundraising the Building Fund had approximately $130,000.00. To date $761,532.58 has been pledged to the project. Of that amount $609,512.09 has been collected. The total expense for the project, which now includes the change orders, is $949,956.11 for Dalke Construction. Another large expense includes the new sound system from Cascade Sound which totals $17,633.63. There were additional bills along the way as part of the project, all of which were expected and budgeted for: final architect fees, permit/SDC fees, asbestos & lead paint testing and abatement, materials/compaction/installation testing via Carlson Testing, etc. Total outstanding bills to all parties for completion are $201,688.13. The Archdiocese of Portland Parish Funds Trust approved St. Paul for a loan of up to $370,000.00. To date, we have not tapped into that loan. However, our cash on hand is mostly depleted and we will have to tap into that loan very shortly as we await continued payments on pledge money. The great news is that if all the outstanding pledge money were paid in full this month, we would only need about $52,000 to pay for the entire project! This is excellent news and progress!

Archbishop Sample will be with us on Thursday, August 24th at 6:00pm to bless the new Narthex addition. This will be followed by a potluck supper in the parish hall. Please attend this event if you are able. It will be a wonderful opportunity to celebrate as a parish this great accomplishment and to thank the many individuals who have been integral in the success of our work together.

1. **Religious Education**

Religious Education continues to be a top priority here at St. Paul. Our New DRE/Youth Minister, Christian will be fundamentally critical in aiding and bringing much needed coordination and direction to our Religious Ed. programs.

The parish has talked for some time about the desire and need to integrate our religious education program for our K-12 youth into a single program. After the departure of Sr. Rocio in February and with the tumult that resulted thereafter, I felt it was appropriate to step-back from this goal in order to allow the whole community to breathe and settle. I also felt it was good not to rush implementation of a new, integrated RE program before we were ready; a rushed integrated program could have disastrous, unforeseen effects. As a result, it is appropriate that the RE programs that have been in place before continue unchanged for the coming ’17-’18 academic calendar.

That being said, there needs to be a dialogue and conversation within the parish about the implementation of an integrated RE program for the ’18-’19 academic calendar. The time to begin having those conversations is now. At the recommendation of a recent joint council meeting, a subcommittee of the Pastoral Council will be formed with representatives from both the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking catechists to begin meeting early this Fall. The goal of this subcommittee will be to discuss why an integrated program is need and to discuss what an integrated program would look like (i.e. day, time, curriculum, cultural sensitivities, communication with parents, teachers and teacher aides, etc.) Both myself and Christian will be involved in this process and in the meetings too. The hope is that this group can make list of recommendations to me and to the Pastoral Council by January. In consultation with the Pastoral Council and Christian, a final determination on what an integrated RE program will look like and be will be announced and published, hopefully, by March as RE registration time begins for the ’18-’19 academic year. I hope to soon make invitations to committee members to begin forming their meetings. When the subcommittee is formed, members will be published and announced to the parish so that parishioners may make their suggestions, ideas, concerns known to subcommittee members, and those subcommittee members may be a voice in these private subcommittee meetings.

1. **Marriage**

Care for the Sacrament of Matrimony is among my highest priorities at St. Paul. Experience and observation have shown me time and again that a well-tended marriage preparation program, good ongoing marriage formation, and reaching out to couples who need canonical assistance with their marriages reaps untold rewards for the spouses, their children, and the entire parish. Being incapable of serving spouses well leads to the detriment of the entire parish family.

I have previously announced at Mass that this will be an important initiative of both me and the Pastoral Council for the coming year. I am pleased to share with you that some work has already been done in this regard, but there is still much more to be done. A joint council meeting recently produced a list of recommendations for couples who would model well the Sacrament of Matrimony as teachers, mentors, and support couples. I will be reaching out to these couples shortly and inviting them to assist with marriage preparation program at the Father Bernard Youth Center in Mount Angel, OR. Both Fr. Philip of St. Mary’s and I met recently with the FBYC team to discuss with them our need to have a marriage preparation program that provides solid teaching and good curriculum that will have a lasting impact on couples preparing for marriage. FBYC already has an established program and it is excellent. St. Mary’s and St. Paul will continue to support this program and, as much as we are able, to send couples to the FBYC for marriage preparation. To assist the parishes in this goal, FBYC will now be offering marriage classes in English twice a year instead of once a year. The program lasts 2 months. Currently, FBYC does not offer marriage classes in Spanish. However, that is something that St. Mary’s and St. Paul will be working with them on this coming year. Identifying Spanish-speaking couples in the parish who can learn and observe the program this coming year will be foundational in beginning a Spanish marriage prep program at FBYC for the Fall of 2018.

There is also the challenge of offering ongoing marriage formation. The first few years of marriage can be difficult and challenging. Many parishes do not have anything to support couples after they are married. This is a critical component of successful marriages. Again, working with FBYC in Mount Angel and with St. Mary’s, St. Paul will be asking couples to act as “mentors” for newlywed couples. This program is still in the planning phase and needs to be developed further. Input and suggestions are welcome. Any couples who are interested in helping with marriage formation, please contact me soon.

Finally, I have invited the Canonical Services Department of the Archdiocese to present at St. Paul on Saturday, October 28th from 9:00am-12:00noon. The presentation is open to the entire parish, but is specifically designed for individuals or couples who need convalidations, annulments, etc.

1. **Conclusion**

This has been a busy and very fruitful past year. This coming year looks to be just as busy with new initiatives and new work. I am very grateful to the entire parish for supporting one another as we work together to build up the Kingdom of God here at St. Paul and in Silverton. Please keep one another (and your pastor) in prayer. May Christ who has begun all these good works at St. Paul bring it to completion according to His will.

Gratefully yours in Christ,

Rev. Basil Lawrence, OSB

Parochial Administrator