

2024 Stewardship Homily

Sunday, November 17, 2024

In our Gospel we hear Jesus say referring to the end of time: “They will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.” In our liturgy for the Feast of Christ the King we hear that Jesus will come at the end of time to fulfill the Kingdom He began on earth: “an eternal and universal kingdom, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.” Thus, the coming of Jesus at the end of time is to be yearned for, not feared. Our calling as disciples of Jesus, relying on His grace, is to build His Kingdom one step at a time. We at Holy Family are earnestly trying to do this. I humbly ask, with all my heart, for your wholehearted support in our effort to make the Kingdom of Jesus a reality, one step at a time, here at Holy Family.

As we approach the end of our Liturgical year, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you how we are doing as a parish financially and how we are using your generosity of time, talent, and treasure to Holy Family. Your contributions are making a difference in the life of our rapidly growing Parish and in our community.

Our Youth Ministry team has made incredible progress this year. Because of an investment we made in a new 7th and 8th grade Confirmation curriculum, our middle schoolers are seeing RE as an opportunity, not an obligation, and are excited to come to class. We are seeing over 200 middle and high school students come together to be fed spiritually (and physically) every Sunday night.

Our Young Adult ministry, which began because of a financial grant from St. Meinrad in 2019, is now relying on your generosity to further expand and develop young adult programs which includes bringing them into Parish leadership. Ya’ll, this is incredible!

Our RE program continues to thrive with over 170 teen and adult volunteers giving of their time to catechize our children. We have invested in technology for all our classrooms to provide the best possible internet-based

RE-curriculum. We also continue to expand and improve our Religious formation to those with diverse needs.

Our nursery program is such a bright spot. It has added extra youth workers to expand its services to include Sunday night Mass and many other events in order for our young parents to attend.

Our Learning Center is in its 25th year of providing a high quality, state licensed early childhood educational program for children ages 2-5. Through state funded grants and your continued support, the Learning Center was able to add a fully contained, high quality playground for our 98 precious children. Because the safety of the children of the Learning Center and of our Church community is always our number 1 priority, we added bullet resistant film to all accessible windows and doors.

RCIA, which you will now hear being referred to as OCIA (the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults), provides the resources to receive individuals into the Catholic Church throughout the calendar year rather than following a school-year model of formation. This flexibility in meeting individuals where they are on their faith journey is perhaps the reason for our growing number of participants. We have hired Kari Staley who coordinates with RE, OCIA, and the Youth Program when children, youth, and teens are returning to the Catholic faith and require additional formation to receive their sacraments.

We have seen substantial growth in our ministries and increased adult faith formation programming. 3 new ministries were created this year. We are sending care notes of encouragement to our families who need a little extra support – this Angel Post ministry sent over 500 handwritten notes this year. Our new Family Fellowship Ministry hosted 9 family events, bringing together almost 200 families for meaningful connection and community. The 3rd new ministry, His Way at Work, is inspiring over 33 business owners to dedicate their businesses to the Lord.

To better support our growing parish and ministries, we have invested in a new church database system that allows us to connect our families to events, ministries, and service opportunities that truly resonate with each family.

This new system has brought us a much sought-after online calendar that helps us manage the over 2,700 room and resource reservations we experienced last year.

You may have noticed that, through your generosity, we were able to refinish the wood gym floor, paint the Parish Hall and Learning Center, upgrade the lighting in the front courtyard of the worship space and gym entrance, redecorate the gather conference room, and recently complete repairs, resealing, and restriping of the entire parking lot.

So, these are some the ways that your contributions have benefited Holy Family this past year.

There is much more I could say, but now I must speak about the future.

Our budget for this fiscal year includes a full year of payroll for the new staff to support the Youth Ministry, OCIA, and our Pastoral team of \$150,000; an increase this year in our property insurance of \$40,000, and \$30,000 in repairs and maintenance of our aging facility and rectory. Budgeted capital improvements include a complete upgrade to our gather area kitchen which is used extensively every week for coffee and donuts, for our funeral luncheons, and many of our other ministries. We will also be making very necessary upgrades to our wi-fi network capabilities.

Our increase in operational costs at Holy Family mirrors what I am sure is happening in each of your households. We are very sensitive to that. With that said, in order to maintain the level of programming, music, and well-maintained facilities, we find ourselves in a situation we have not been in in almost 10 years. In the first 4 months of this fiscal year, our regular collections were down over 10% and the number of families giving was down over 50 families. I do want to emphasize that our balance sheet remains strong, and we do have savings that have been earmarked for long-term sustainability. We will use these funds if needed, but that is not an ideal strategy for us, as I know each of you try not to use your savings for your normal household expenses.

This brings to mind a time in history when General Patton's success in battle caused him to outrun his supply lines. What we need now is your help to lengthen our supply line.

Today, we are embarking on a Step-Up Campaign. The ushers are handing out a sheet that depicts a ladder. This ladder is divided into giving ranges and identifies how our parish community is currently giving. Please, take this home and take the time to identify on which rung your family stands. And then, I ask you to prayerfully consider taking one step up in your giving. If you are NOT currently financially contributing, I ask you to prayerfully consider how your family might step up on the first rung, which is a giving amount of up to \$20.00 per week. As you find your current giving amount on the ladder, I prayerfully ask you to consider stepping up to the next rung. This sheet explains how you can give or log in to increase your giving. Please know, that I am not asking you to do anything I am not doing – I will be stepping up to the next rung as well. As always, if you discern that your family is unable to give financially at this time, I respectfully ask that you look at other ways to get involved in the parish and keep our Step Up campaign in your prayers. We will provide monthly updates, and you will be able to track our overall progress through a display in the Narthex and in all of our communications.

Being successful in this Step Up campaign will enable us to maintain and continue to grow our programming as the number of new families shows no sign of slowing. I have complete faith in our ability to grow our regular weekly giving. Every time I have come before you to make an ask, you have always responded with a generosity that humbles me. I do not doubt that this time will be any different. We find ourselves in unprecedented times, in our families, in our parish, in our community and in our country, but with God's grace we will remain a beacon of light. We are NOT stopping, we are DEFINITELY not going back, but we are moving forward to best serve you, our parishioners.

In a world that values wise financial investments, please invest in our Parish Community of Holy Family: our children, our young persons, our young adults, our community life, our Spiritual life. I ask with all my heart for your wholehearted support to make the Kingdom of Jesus a reality, relying on His

grace, one step at a time, here at Holy Family. I believe it truly is the best investment we can make with our time, our treasure, and our lives!

Please know of my daily prayers for you and your families. Please keep me in yours. Together, let us knock this ball out of the park!