

CSA 2023 Finance Council Talk ~ 2/11/23

On behalf of the Finance Council and Fr. Matt, I would like to thank all of you for your generous support of this program. For many years, with your generosity, we have not only been able to meet our obligation to the Diocese, but we have also been able to address most of the smaller capital needs of our Parish.

Sometimes we find it difficult to look forward without looking into our past. We, like most churches, are still feeling the effects of Covid 19. Several parishioners have yet to, or may never, return to mass. The number of Priests in our Diocese continues to decline. Smaller numbers are leading to Parish consolidations. The future appears rather cloudy.

As we all know, 2022 was a very difficult year for a number of reasons at Our Lady of Mercy. In addition to our own shrinking family, after some difficult health issues, we lost our longtime Shepherd, Fr. Ritchie. We quickly learned the process of naming a new Pastor is not a swift one. The OLM staff was swamped with many new and additional duties. We would like to congratulate Deacon Paul and the entire staff, as well as our visiting Priests, for maintaining

some level of normalcy for all of us. Yet, while we prayerfully moved forward awaiting the announcement of our new Pastor, things seemed to move at a slower pace. Regardless of the reason, our financial support was also negatively affected last year. Both our offertory giving, and CSA contributions were down from previous years. The money received through the CSA turned out to be well below the amount pledged. In addition, we were slightly short of meeting our Diocesan assessment. This meant we had to dip into our savings to meet our assessment and to cover those necessary smaller capital expenses.

Enough looking back, 2023 is now lining up to be an exciting year for Our Lady of Mercy. On December 18th Bishop Persico commissioned Fr. Matt as our new Pastor and we are already seeing positive reactions returning to our community.

While Fr. Matt is working hard with the staff and the many different parish ministries to help grow this excitement in the coming year, the need to keep our financial house in order will not change. And this brings us back to the topic of this year's Catholic Services Appeal.

We have identified about half a dozen capital expense items that will need to be addressed in the next few years. The more immediate items include:

Replace the skylight at the atrium	\$ 5,000
Replace the east gym storage room roof	\$13,300
Replace the garage and food pantry roof	\$24,500

Our longer-term capital expense items are:

Replace the concrete at the church entrances	\$ 5,000
Replace the Sperry Hall Boiler	\$ 20,000
Recarpet the worship space	\$ 30,000
HVAC replacement	\$ 30,000
At some point – repave the parking lot	\$100,000

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As you heard Bishop Persico in the video, this year's appeal is titled "*Fueling the Mission Together*". While I've talked about the impact this appeal can have on our own parish, we must keep in mind we are all called beyond our own community. The Catholic Church remains a powerful force in doing God's work here in Erie and around the world. The Bishop used the terms Evangelize, Welcome, Heal, Assist, Educate, and Accompany. Many of these needs are beyond the ability and resources of any individual or parish. But united as a Diocesan Family, we will be able to make a difference in so many people's lives. Collectively, our responses can help meet these needs. The CHURCH NEEDS YOU to do the Work Christ has called us to do. What a wonderful feeling knowing your gift can do all of that AND help with the needs at our church as well.

Our CSA assessment for this year is \$70,634. This is \$1475 up from last year's assessment. In 2022 we had pledges of \$78,595. We usually collect over 95% of what is pledged. That means we expected to have over \$5,500 remaining to use for our smaller capital needs. Unfortunately, we only collected \$68,870 or \$5,800 below expectations. As a contrast, in 2021 our assessment was \$68,405. Pledges were \$83,630 and we collected \$81,187. That year we had almost \$13,000 to use for those unplanned capital expenses.

We ask for your help.

We ask each family to consider a \$500 pledge. We fully understand and appreciate that not all families will be able to contribute at this \$500 level, so to help us achieve our overall fundraising goal, we ask families that are able to contribute more, to please consider doing so. We have all seen the effects of inflation this past year. I think it's important to point out that we had not raised the requested family pledge in seven years.

Please keep Faith Direct in mind as an option for handling your pledge. This has worked well for many of our parishioners in the past. As a reminder, if you choose to use Faith Direct, **you** must initiate your commitment with Faith Direct **or give permission** to Our Lady of Mercy on the Pledge Sheet.

There is a Faith Direct table set up in the gathering space after mass this weekend and next weekend to help answer any questions concerning how you could utilize Faith Direct for your giving needs. Be sure to ask them about the new "**Text to Give**" program which could serve as another handy tool for many of you.

One final reminder, funds donated to the CSA are placed in a designated account and used solely to support the programs and ministries of the diocese and cannot be used for any other purpose. Any funds raised above the assessed amount will remain right here at Our Lady of Mercy to help meet the ongoing needs of our parish.

Next week, you will be asked to make your commitment for 2023.

On behalf of Father Matt and the entire Finance Committee, we cannot express enough our pride in this community that continues to step up when they are called upon.

We thank you in advance for your continued prayers, services, and your financial generosity in support of our Parish and ask for God's continued blessings on you and your families.

Paul Barko

Mike Brown

Gail Cook

Tina Gowen

Tom Palisin

Chip Shamburg