

**STATE OF THE BASILICA**  
**Fr. Brad Milunski, OFM Conv.**  
**March 12-13, 2022**

OPENING PRAYER – Synod Prayer

- Thank you all for coming this evening/afternoon.
- A word about why I decided to present the “State of the Basilica” in this format:
  - The idea arose from me hearing news that the date of the State of the Union had been established.
  - I asked myself why we don’t do something similar, i.e., present the financial and pastoral health of the parish in a similar format?
- I don’t intend this to last as long as the State of the Union, but I hope certainly to
  - 1) offer a brief list of the strengths we enjoy and the challenges we face as a parish family, a list that is not meant to be exhaustive;
  - 2) lay out the current financial picture of the parish, school, and cemetery.
- The format:
  - Share with you where we are as a parish family
  - Take some time to entertain questions you might have
  - Close with prayer and a printed copy of the financial report to take home for further study. (I decided to hold the financial reports until you leave so that you could focus on what I’m saying without the distraction of a printed page of figures in front of you.)
  - The video of this session after the 4pm Mass will be available on the YouTube channel of the parish where the Mass is livestreamed each Sunday.
  - In addition, the financial reports and the text of this presentation will be posted on the parish website. This text will also have a translation in Polish.

In trying to sum up a way to help us start from the same page, I decided to investigate the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the definition of what a parish is:

[2179] "A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular church; the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a pastor as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop" [Code of Canon Law]. It is the place where all the faithful can be gathered together for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life: it gathers them together in this celebration; it teaches Christ's saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love:

You cannot pray at home as at church, where there is a great multitude, where exclamations are cried out to God as from one great heart, and where there is something more: the union of minds, the accord of souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of the priests. (St. John Chrysostom)

So...as Catholics our parishes exist for this purpose:

- to provide for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist
- lead the Christian people in worship
- teach Christ's saving doctrine
- practice divine charity in good works and fraternal love
- As the quotation from St. John Chrysostom states, we are called to cry out to God "as from *one great heart*." I love that image!

That's why we exist. Everything that we do spiritually, educationally, liturgically, financially, etc. must support this fundamental mission that makes a parish a parish.

As your pastor for only nine months, I'd like to lay out *some* of the strengths and challenges we face. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but reflective more of overarching qualities rather than zero in on the details:

#### STRENGTHS

- We have a strong and justifiably proud history, not only in Chicopee but in western Massachusetts.
- A huge part of that history is the strong Franciscan and Polish heritage of St. Stan's, but it's not a heritage that divides but rather unites.
- We are widely known as a center for ministry, particularly in the confessional and for Adoration of the Eucharist. People come from far and wide to avail themselves of this sacrament, and one of the frequent messages I hear, practically daily, is "Thank you for being here."
- We have a very active outreach to the poor and take good care of our sick and homebound parishioners through frequent visits, mailings, and phone calls.
- We have a dedicated core of staff, including two permanent deacons, and volunteers, especially for parish activities and fundraisers.
- We have a school that enjoys an excellent reputation in the Diocese.
- Our cemetery is praised for how well-kept it is.
- We are a generous parish.... When you see the need, you give wholeheartedly, and not just financially.

CHALLENGES - I prefer the word "challenge" because it highlights that there's always work to be done, and we have the ability to do it if we wish. Many of these challenges are shared with other parishes as well and reflect trends in our larger society, which has become indifferent to and oftentimes antagonistic to Christian morals and religious practice.

- Financial challenges I will treat when I specifically speak about the financial report in a few moments.
- The need to "go out," i.e., embracing the call of recent popes:

- Pope St. John Paul II/Benedict XVI: to embrace the new evangelization in bringing the gospel to our homes and families, which are increasingly subject to de-Christianizing forces and secularization, e.g., pretending that we can live without God and our faith
- Pope Francis: to *go out* rather than wait for people to come *to us*: How do we bring back people who dropped off because of lukewarmness or indifference to their faith and those whom we lost during COVID?
- Increase participation in adult faith formation: engaging our faith as adults and not just with the answers we learned as children
- Engage again the young adults and teens who are on the margins or adrift in virtual worlds that they find more exciting than their Catholic faith. Some efforts are already underway in the Diocese so that parishes don't have to go it alone.
- New volunteers: We tend to depend on the same core group of parishioners to volunteer, and some may not have the energy they once had. How do we engage **all** of us in our mission?

I think those are significant enough as a kind of thumbnail sketch, and I'd like to move on in the interests of time to the financial state of the Basilica and its ministries.

As I said, I would ask you please to listen to the text first and then study the numbers when you go home.

The report consists of three parts:

- Annual Financial Report of the Basilica of St. Stanislaus
- Annual Financial Report of St. Stanislaus Cemetery
- Annual Financial Report of St. Stanislaus School

COVID 19 prevented an annual financial report to the Parish for these past two years. Please note that the fiscal year for the Basilica, Cemetery, and the School begins on July 1 and ends on June 30.

### 1) ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE BASILICA:

#### PERIOD FROM **JULY 1, 2019 to JUNE 30, 2020** –

For the 12-month period from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020, total operating revenues were tracking favorably when compared to the 2019 operating revenues until COVID 19 hit on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020, two years ago this weekend. The shutdown of all parish services which prevented parishioners from worshipping in person had an immediate negative impact on the financial health of the parish. Weekly offertory collections declined 15% when compared to weekly collections for the previous year. Fundraising and donations were also negatively impacted by COVID. Total operating expenses were managed throughout the year. It should be noted that the Diocese

required all parishes to retain their employees on active payrolls despite the major financial impact that all parishes were suffering from the shutdown of services. Other major expenses besides payroll included the replacement of the much-needed Basilica Air Conditioning system and continued budgetary support of our School. Budgetary support of the school, which is more than \$300,000 annually, consists of a direct cash subsidy, special monthly collections, Solar Farm lease income, and Bingo proceeds. In 2019-2020, additional major capital expenses were realized for the school's roof, boiler, and HVAC system all of which were paid for from bequests left by generous parishioners to the parish. (All buildings belong to the parish.) It should be noted that the parish benefited from the Federal Government's Paycheck Protection Program which supported some of the shortfall in income caused by the COVID 19 shutdown.

#### **PERIOD FROM JULY 1, 2020, TO JUNE 30, 2021 -**

For the 12-month period from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, the parish continued to be negatively impacted from the shutdown caused by COVID 19. Weekly offertory collections were down, however, the decline was supported by the generosity of the parishioners from special collections such as a COVID collection, fuel and assistance collections, and the Annual Fund. The operating expenses again continued to be managed throughout the year. Capital was expended for the completion of the beautiful stained glass window project. Additional capital expenditures were realized for the continuation and completion of the school's roof, boiler, and HVAC system. Total expenditures for the school in the final amount of \$1.5 million, and the capital expenditures for the parish, were paid for from bequests left by generous parishioners to the parish. The parish once again benefited from the Federal Government's Paycheck Protection Program which supported the shortfall in income caused by the COVID 19 shutdown in March 2020.

Even though more people have now returned to participate in weekly Masses, the financial results for the first 6 months of the current 2022 year, indicate that weekly collections are still down approximately 5% from historical levels. Fundraising, donations, and bequests are all tracking below budget projections. Not unlike your own households, the Basilica is facing higher costs due to inflation for utilities, food, and fuel. I know it is a great sacrifice to ask of you in such times, but I humbly ask that you consider making an increased and sustained sacrificial giving that you can manage.

#### **FUTURE EXPENDITURES THAT THE BASILICA WILL BE FACING...**

Finance and Administration is currently working with the Diocese involving the school building which is now in need of critical exterior work to be completed in the near future. Details of the project scope and cost are yet to be finalized; however, the final

expense could possibly be quite substantial to the parish. Financial support of this major project is currently being discussed with the Finance Council.

- PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED ACCESS TO THE LOWER BASILICA: how best to provide that access and still be financially responsible
- LONG OVERDUE REHAB TO THE LOWER BASILICA, including confessionals that are more in line with protocols for adequate space and safeguarding of youth and vulnerable adults.

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## 2) ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE CEMETERY:

PERIOD FROM JULY 1, 2019, to JUNE 30, 2020 -

For the 12-month period from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020, the Cemetery continued to track favorably for operating revenues where most of the revenues, up until the start of COVID in March 2020, were generated from full ground burials. As we all know, when COVID began burials began to be negatively impacted with delays. Expenses for the Cemetery are minimal and historically tightly controlled. Overall financial results continued to be favorable.

For the 12-month period from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, the Cemetery began to see a movement toward more cremations than full body burials. COVID continued to cause delays in burials. Expenses continued to be tightly controlled. Overall financial results continued to be favorable.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE -

Finance Council is currently investigating (a) columbarium(s) to be constructed in the Cemetery. Columbariums are being investigated and planned by other area cemeteries. Columbariums do serve as a source of additional income for the cemetery and allow for the preservation of land.

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## 3) ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE SCHOOL:

PERIOD FROM JULY 1, 2019, to JUNE 30, 2020 -

For the 12-month period from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020, the School's operating revenues tracked according to budget, however, fundraising efforts were negatively

impacted in the last quarter of this year due to onset of COVID 19, specifically, the loss of Bingo income which is a major source of income for the school. A Parish subsidy to the school supported the loss of income to cover operating expenses which exceeded budget. The school also benefited from the Federal Government's Paycheck Protection Program, which supported the financially challenged operations of the School for the 2020 School year, and huge fundraising efforts to make up shortfalls from the lack of bingo income during COVID.

#### PERIOD FROM JULY 1, 2020, to JUNE 30, 2021 -

For the 12-month period from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, as a result of higher enrollment numbers in all School Programs, the School's operating revenues tracked more favorably when compared to the previous 2020 School year. Operating expenses for the period were well-managed allowing the school to achieve satisfactory financial results for this School year.

St. Stanislaus School has greatly benefited from the addition to the school administration of a business manager, Mrs. Ann Marie DaSilva Nembirkow, and a newly appointed and highly professional and dedicated School Board that has begun processes of long-range and strategic planning for the health and financial well-being of the school. I want to thank them for the work they have done already in moving us forward.

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#### SUMMARY

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I would like to thank Karl Hammond and the office staff for their dedicated and hard work that remains firmly committed to financial transparency and accountability. Detailed Financial Reports for the Basilica, Cemetery, and the School were prepared by the Basilica's Finance & Administration Office in collaboration with the Finance Council and will be published in the Bulletin plus available on the Parish website. Questions regarding the Financial Reports should be directed to Mr. Karl Hammond, Finance & Administration Manager. I would like to thank both Karl and Diane LaCosse for their excellent collaboration.

Thank you to the friars, parish and school staff, Parish and Finance Council members, members of the various committees, and the newly appointed School Board. Most of all I would like to thank all of YOU who continue to support the Basilica of St. Stanislaus and all its ministries.

- Q & A
- Closing Prayer: "Hail Mary...."