



SAINT FRANCIS PARISH

BOX 839

ELLSWORTH, WISCONSIN 54011

Dear Parishioners.

As your Pastor, I feel that it is important that the parish share with its members a full picture of our parish/school financial health as we maintain and grow our faith community.

It is my goal for St. Francis Parish to have a policy of accountability with complete transparency in all financial matters.

The first week after arriving at the parish and learning about the difficult financial condition of our parish school I called for a meeting with the school principal - we have met several times on different occasions. The school situation was addressed to the finance and pastoral councils followed by another joint meeting between the finance council and the school.

Upon hearing from representatives of the parish and the school - I have submitted my report to Bishop Callahan asking for advice and recommendations.

In my report, I have indicated the school and the parish's difficult financial status. In response to my concerns, the Diocese sent us the Diocesan School Superintendent - and we had another meeting where representatives of the finance council and the school were present.

Bishop Callahan's wish is to sustain the school and to develop a plan to help the situation.

On October 1, I called for a parish Pastoral, Finance Councils, and school joint meeting to recap on our previous work and to develop a strategic plan for the future.

With the current operating school and parish budgets, the parish is unable to sustain the school. And this was a parish problem for at least the last 10 years.

Probably many of you will ask the question (some already did) how did this happen? I asked myself the same question the first week I arrived at the parish. All I can say is that a situation such as this usually occurs when there is a lack of communication between the parish, the school, and parishioners. Communication of any kind is vital in parish life - especially parish finances must be communicated with transparency and in a timely manner otherwise, you may miss a window of opportunity.

My dear brothers and sisters, I assure you, there was never an issue with the mishandling of funds. It was a simple equation of "more going out than coming in".

At all the meetings mentioned above, we have considered several ways of how the parish and the school can work together to help this situation. The alternatives discussed were certainly avenues to explore 8-10 years ago when the school enrollment was at 140 students (69 students presently).

I understand that this is not news that you would like to receive from your "new" Pastor. Neither I was prepared for such. But we still have a chance, and **we will try** to develop a way to generate more funds for our church and school and pray that the solution will be found.

There are creative ways and programs we can do to help both the school and the parish.

I believe that with the right way of marketing the school and a positive attitude we may be successful. Therefore, I am asking you for your understanding, patience, cooperation, and above all for your prayers.

Right now, we are in the process to get the school and parish finances in order with Brian Yanish who is our new parish accountant. Once this is done the parish will be able to provide a financial PowerPoint presentation for the entire parish with the exact budgetary figures at the beginning of December. Meanwhile, I would like to put together a "School Committee" that will serve to find ways to save our school.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that has contributed to the operation of our school thus far in means of time, talent, and treasure. None of this goes unnoticed in the eyes of God!

Cheerfully in Christ,

Fr. Jerzy