



AN IMPORTANT LETTER CONCERNING ST. JOHN'S TO ALL OUR PARISHIONERS

As I write this, I am deeply aware of many hardships. I acknowledge that some are already doing all that they can. A loving gift, whatever size, is never small in God's sight. Be grateful for what you *can* do. We all are a part of St. John's, and so I invite all to approach this according to your means. I am confident we will meet this challenge! For you, I am grateful, and pray for you, always!

This letter is going out to everyone. I have spoken at all the Masses. If you were not able to be there, please look over our stewardship report for St. John's. (On the web or at Church) I would call your kind attention to **two factors**, which have a great impact on our Parish's mission in Christ:

First:

- Over the last three years, our offertory income has been essentially "flat"
- We have been deferring capital maintenance at Wilde Lake. We, as the larger of two congregations pay 80 percent of shared facility use; 100% when it essentially benefits our parish alone. These needs have not gone away, and the building shows it.
- The Archdiocese of Baltimore, to rescue the Catholic school system, required a 5% additional annual tax on all parishes, to be offset by any expenditure they incurred if maintaining a parish school. In our case, this added more than 80,000 dollars to our yearly obligations.
- If a parish (ours) has *no* school but maintains a large Religious Education Program for children, **no** offset of expenditure is granted to this recurring tax.
- That we have barely managed to absorb this additional tax and maintain programs under a flat collection, is due to an unexpected change in staffing hours, due to semi retirement for family reasons, and the dedication of funds anticipated from the Lenten Appeal of about 30,000 dollars. We cannot afford to grow or maintain vital parish programs under such financial stress.

In order to sustain our programs all parishioners will be invited to increase their giving, as they see fit, to 4 specific ministries. These do not occur all at once but amount to 1 additional envelope for the parish each week, plus one quarterly envelope for Capital Improvements. These are: **Support for Archdiocesan Catholic Schools * Support for St. John's Religious Education Programs * Support for St. John's Youth Ministry * Support for St. John's Capital Improvements * Support for St. John's Special Collection (Special Needs above Ordinary Capital Improvements)** If you use Church Envelopes you already have these. If not, you may pick up envelopes at Mass, to place in the Collection basket. Those who use Electronic Funds Transfer have a form with this letter, to designate how they wish to support these vital programs. I hope you find greater satisfaction in supporting what is important to you.

Second:

Regular (weekly) church attendance is changing. With family, sports, work and travel schedules more demanding than in the past, when weekends were essentially "free time", church attendance is moving more to "every other Sunday" at the home parish, with a growing trend to "once a month". "Snow birds", "Church Gypsies", Vacations, Work and Family Obligations, and Severe Weather Events, all have an impact on our faithful parishioners' ability to maintain regular attendance and support. This doesn't include the far greater majority of occasional church goers, for whom Mass and church is important, but not a regular commitment, save Christmas, Easter, Funerals, Weddings, Baptisms, Sacraments, etc.

Obviously, for our church to make a commitment to "be there for us" always, we all need to make a commitment to support our church, so that it can be there. **Last week, the Archbishop sent a letter to all churches informing them of the regional planning that would begin the consolidation of Mass schedules, co-joining of parishes, and closing of church institutions, in the face of decreasing clergy, parish and school registration, and financial support.**

Happily, there is a solution: It is actually an old idea. Parishioners "played catch up" with their weekly offerings, when returning to church after being away, or even ill. (When my grandmother could no longer come to church, she still maintained a small stack of envelopes, to give to the priest when he brought her monthly communion. She was proud, in that way, to still be sustaining her beloved church, even when she could not be there.) You probably have similar stories in your own family, of such personal dedication to a home parish. **I encourage you to use the form with this letter to sign up for Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT), or, Online Bill Pay through your own bank, which provides us with a reliable Offertory income. To encourage participation, we are running a fun 'sign up event this month', with two "I Pad 2's" as prizes. (Information is available on the web or at church.)** Your regular support sustains all our programs. I am very, personally grateful to you. My grandmother, and maybe *yours*, would be proud of you!

With hopes to see you at our 10 o'clock Mass on Thanksgiving. God Bless!

Fr. Gerry Bowen