



St. Bartholomew Parish
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Dear Parishioners of St. Bartholomew Parish:

I am writing to foster clarity and transparency regarding the financial condition of our parish. Recently, I have been challenging parishioners to accept more responsibility and become more aware of our current circumstances. With this letter, I would like to continue to encourage and facilitate that process, by providing more details about what has been done so far, what needs to be done, and where we are. There is a lot to share, and I know this is a long letter, but I thank you for your patience and your generous commitment to the church.

I intend to address three issues: first, deferred maintenance; second, revenue; and third, volunteer engagement. I also want to make you aware of who is on the parish and finance councils, and other work we can do together.

The broader context for this letter is this question: what role should St. Bart's play in the mission of the Church in our present time? We love our church because we love the values that it embodies: it makes real, in a physical way, a place of encounter with Heaven and God's grace. It is a place for community and holiness. **At the same time, it is important for us to remember that Heaven can be encountered everywhere, that Christ lives within all of us, that the importance of sacraments and ministry is not limited to a particular set of four walls, and the mission of the Church is for everyone, everywhere.** Fundamentally, the true Church is the people who are the living stones of the Heavenly Jerusalem. It is our mission to accomplish the universal mission of Christ in our time and place, and we need to determine how best to accomplish that mission, and what value St. Bart's walls and roof contribute to the mission. We are called to be missionary disciples; that is our fundamental identity, and we need to discern how to live that out most effectively.

So, we must evaluate the cost of these four walls, and the price of keeping them. Earlier this year, as we know from the annual report, we saw a \$200,000+ deficit. This year, the deficit will be less, but that is mostly because we didn't spend money that we needed to spend on maintenance. On the other hand, this year, we also raised a large amount of money for the air conditioner, in an impressively short amount of time. So that indicates that there is potential for a more fiscally responsible future.

One other recent success was the formation of a finance council. While previous pastors resisted this, canon law requires a finance council. Kathy Rothschild formed this council which met for the first time in May. They have met several times since and are aware of our challenges and are actively addressing them. The members of the finance council are Kathy Marks, Katie Kircher, Tiffany Hanisch, Bob Stevenot, and Tom Kessinger. For your information, members of the parish council are Colleen Wietmarschen, Ken Radziwon, Joe Arnold, Jerry Yox, Jon Tobin, Joanne Hauser, Charlie McDonald, Joy Niehaus, and Ashley Evans. Joe, Joy, and Ken also serve on the Family Pastoral Council.

The following section was mostly composed by the finance council, in collaboration with me. I am grateful for their contributions. I offer it to you for your consideration:

1. Maintenance Needs – Caring for God’s House

Much needs to be done and has been deferred for too long. We made a big step recently, when we replaced the roof on the church building and the rectory. While that is a big step in the right direction, it’s just the beginning. We also came together quickly and generously to fund a new air conditioner, which indicates that there is potential for growth.

Many **outstanding maintenance issues** have been identified:

- The **church roof drains** were not replaced with the roof and are now leaking significantly, causing ceiling disintegration, visible water damage, and the risk of mold.
- The **parking lot**, especially the area used by schoolchildren, needs prompt repair to ensure safety. Costs here will be shared with JPII School (50/50 split).
- The **office building** needs a new roof and many major interior updates.
- The **sound system** in the church must be replaced soon.
- The **ceiling, narthex, and flooring** also require repair.
- A **major water main** is overdue for repair—and its failure would seriously affect the entire campus, both school and church.

These issues may seem daunting, but they are not insurmountable. With coordinated planning and united effort, they can be addressed. The **Finance Council** is currently reviewing all needs, gathering bids, and will prioritize the work.

While guesstimates suggest a total cost of possibly \$2 million, these are investments in the future of our parish—and we’ve already proven that we can meet big goals together.

2. Financial Sustainability – Building a Strong Foundation

St. Bart’s is blessed with parishioners who care deeply about our church. That said, our **weekly collections**—which fund regular operations like salaries, utilities, and ministry—are not where they need to be.

Rising costs, inflation, and lower attendance mean we all need to revisit our weekly giving. We would ask each of you to prayerfully consider, in the presence of God, how much you can increase your weekly giving. We each give according to our means, but every gift matters—especially when it’s made with love and faith.

The Finance Council is working to define clear giving goals, and we will keep you informed with **monthly updates**.

3. Engagement – Your Time and Talent Make the Difference

Even more important than financial support is the gift of your time and talent, especially prayer and virtuous living. A parish thrives when its people are active and involved and faithful.

We are blessed with a dedicated core group of volunteers—but they need help. We can’t rely on the same small group forever. Now is the time to **step forward**, bring your gifts, and be part of something truly life-giving.

We especially need:

- **Catechists**
- **Youth ministry volunteers**
- **OCIA team members**
- **Sacristans, lectors, extraordinary ministers of communion, altar servers, and bereavement volunteers**
- **Building and Grounds Committee members**
- And volunteers for hospitality, social events, and more!

There are also countless other ways to get involved—and we want to match your gifts with our parish’s needs. The Parish Council is working on a list of opportunities and a way to gather your input.

And most importantly: **please pray for our parish**. Pray for renewal. Pray for conversions. Pray for one another. And strive daily to live as the saints did—with radical fidelity and love for others. Once we begin to experience what a transformative encounter with Christ is like, we will become contagious in our desire to share that with others and bring them to the same experience.

Again, I am grateful for the collaboration of the finance council in the presentation of the information given above. It is my pledge to you to continue the pastoral planning process with transparency and frankness. We will be communicating about the exact financial state of the parishes, with monthly updates and reports. Currently, it is too early to make a commitment about the future of the parish, and we need to prayerfully discern the reality of St. Bart’s future

in the mission of the Church. Finances are only one aspect of parish life, albeit an important one. Another aspect is evangelization, ministry, and outreach. Prayer and spirituality are the most fundamental. Let us prayerfully distill what we value most and orient ourselves accordingly. The fundamental value of the church building is the relationship with God that the Church community offers.

Be sure of my prayers for you and thank you for your prayers and continued support!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Henry Hoffmann

Parish Council

Joe Arnold*	Jon Tobin
Ashley Evans	Colleen Wietmarschen
Joanne Hauser	Jerry Yox
Joy Niehaus*	Charlie McDonald (Secretary)
Ken Radziwon*	

Finance Committee

Tiffany Hanisch
Tom Kessinger
Katie Kircher
Kathy Marks
Bob Stevenot

*members of the Family Parish Council