



St. Bartholomew Parish  
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## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS RE: ST. BARTHOLOMEW PARISH**

**BY: FATHER HENRY HOFFMANN, PASTOR**

**SEPTEMBER 28, 2025**

**QUESTION: Is the parish going to close? If so, how is that decided, and who makes the ultimate decision, and who are the leaders of the parish that are responsible for the process?**

ANSWER: The parish does not have to close at this time. However, the entire Archdiocese is going through a pastoral planning process, in which we are consolidating and pooling resources.

The pastoral planning process requires that we (i.e., the five parishes in our parish family) become one parish. A parish is a legal and financial entity, with a staff. One parish may have different churches, i.e., buildings or campuses. When the parishes in our family of parishes become one parish, there may be several worship campuses. Which church building(s) remain functioning as worship campuses depends upon which are the most vibrant, strategically located, and structurally suitable.

For a parish to close, first, the parish and finance councils must vote and approve. Then the decision is submitted to two councils at the Archdiocese level, and then it is submitted to the Archbishop. The Archbishop must make the final decision.

The Family Parish Council, which is comprised of representatives from the individual parish councils, (representation is apportioned based on Mass attendance numbers, so St. Bart's has the most representatives) is currently developing a set of criteria according to which the various campuses will be evaluated.

Please see the parish website and my letter from September 7, 2025, for a list of the names of the parish and finance council members. <https://estbarts.org/parish-news/letter-to-parishioners>

**QUESTION: Please address the issue that Father Henry raised in a homily about a \$200,000.00 deficit, and please address the rumors that say this isn't true. Was a mistake made? If so, who made the mistake, and how can we trust financial information in the future?**

ANSWER: The numbers are correct. The term "deficit" means that more cash was spent than was brought in. However, it is not a debt. Thankfully, we didn't have to borrow money to cover the deficit. It was covered by subtracting from our parish account.

In fiscal year 23-24, as reported in the Annual Report this spring, St. Bart's cash outflows exceeded inflows by \$215,619. This was because \$219,137 of parish funds were spent as a capital expense for the roof of the church and rectory. Parish savings were drawn upon to cover the deficit. This reduced St. Bart's total cash on hand to \$152,336. This is the reason that funds had to be raised urgently to repair the HVAC in 24-25.

Thus, as I mentioned in my homily, if this trend continues, we will not be in a good financial position. Thankfully, we ended fiscal year 24-25 solidly in the black. However, we do not have anything close to the funds we need to make necessary repairs. The historical approach of fundraising in reaction to urgent situations does not reflect best practices for effective financial planning. Rather, we need to build a capital improvement fund and a multi-year plan to address maintenance needs consistently.

**QUESTION: What about financial transparency? Father Henry has publicly written that transparency is a goal of his, but we don't see that yet.**

ANSWER: I have been pastor since May 1st, 2025. During that time, I have publicly stated that transparency is a priority. We are working towards accomplishing that goal. Here are some things that have happened so far, and next steps:

Canon law requires that each parish have a finance council. Apparently, a previous pastor dissolved the finance council at St. Bart's about 10 years ago. The finance council has been restarted this year, with members who were recommended by St. Bart's parishioners and staff, and which met for the first time in years, back in May 2025. Since that time, the finance council has been meeting independently, and with Kathy and Fr. Henry, monthly, and more frequently lately. In the future, every finance council will meet bi-monthly and will be provided with year-to-date information five business days ahead of the meeting.

It is also important to know that the Archdiocese performs regular audits. At any time, the Archdiocese can remotely view our bank accounts and accounting software, and make sure that everything is correct.

According to the Archdiocese, all expenses over \$10,000.00 have to be approved by the finance council, and all expenses more than \$25,000.00 must be approved by the Archdiocese.

In our new Family bulletin coming out next month, we plan to share financial information and graphs that will be published weekly. We will have different areas of focus: deferred maintenance, weekly offertory giving numbers, planned giving, online giving, donor demographics, etc., on different weeks, and current Year to Date and weekly giving numbers. Again, this is the plan for the new Family bulletin, which will come out next month.

**QUESTION: What about the money that was raised for the air conditioner? How much was raised, how much has been spent, what is left, and what happens to that leftover money?**

ANSWER: In fiscal year 24/25, \$667,870.00 was raised. In the contract, we agreed to pay \$325,020.00. Payments were made as work was completed, and one payment remains to be made when the project is finished. There is no financing plan or interest payments, and it will be paid in full upon completion of the contract. (Due to supply chain issues with vendors outside of our control, the project is not yet complete.)

Several facts about this project:

- Parishes fund the Archdiocese through assessments. Capital campaigns are assessed at 5.6%. All other fundraising is assessed at 9.7%.
- Local staff encouraged volunteers to take on the project, and proper staff oversight was not involved. Miscommunication and lack of information plagued the start of the project. Consequently, instead of running a capital campaign, it was done as a fundraising push.
- The finance council is currently working with the Archdiocese to see if our funds can be re-assessed at the lower rate.
- Initially, sufficient clarity was not provided to donors about how the money could be used. The finance council is making sure that we can use the leftover money for other capital projects. Legally, it cannot be used contrary to the intention of the donors. It is currently being saved in the parish bank account, and the finance council is working to remedy the issues, such as funding the assessment.
- The other problem involved the selected vendor's supply chain issues. The project has not yet been fully completed.

I am committed to ensure proper accountability and oversight for future capital projects. And the finance council has already drafted a letter to the Archdiocese seeking approval to pursue a capital campaign to raise funds needed for capital improvements. We will not start that campaign until after we have received approval.

**QUESTION: Why is Father Henry writing that we need to raise \$2 million dollars for capital improvements? That seems like a lot of money.**

ANSWER: It's an estimate for deferred maintenance and to build reserves. Please see the preliminary list of facility needs, which I published to the parish in my letter dated September 7, 2025. Here is a short summary: All the parking lots need to be repaired, most especially the one where the school children play, as the large and deep potholes are a hazard to their safety. Additionally, the roofs on the garage, office building, and sacristies need to be replaced. The roof on the narthex must be repaired. The lighting in the church needs to be replaced. The sound system needs to be replaced. Water damage in the ceiling of the church and the narthex needs to be repaired, and any mold issues must be identified and resolved. The interior of the office building should be updated, the water main valve that controls the supply of water to the parish and school is in need of repair, the church floor and pews require attention, and most urgently, the drains in the

roof must be replaced. They were not replaced in 2023 when the roof was replaced, due to lack of funds.

In my September 7<sup>th</sup> letter, I stated that the Finance Council is currently reviewing all needs, gathering bids to get estimates for each project, and will prioritize the work.

All work for major projects involving roofs, gutters, ceilings, etc., will be done by certified professionals who are licensed and insured and who obtain the proper permits. This is in accord with Archdiocese policy and protects the parish from liability.

**QUESTION: Please address the relationship between the parish and the school. If the parish closed, what would happen to the school and to the children?**

ANSWER: John Paul II Consolidated School currently leases the school building from the parish. The school is a consolidated school that educates children from several parishes in the region. Since the school is independent from the parish, the school should remain open if the parish were to close. The school would have to buy the property that it is currently renting. When the school was built, the property was already parceled at the auditor's office. More parceling would have to be done to ensure that the school retained access to the gym and parking lots, but that would not be difficult to accomplish. I want to take this opportunity to reiterate that ministry to families is one of my top priorities. I keep the best interests of the students in the forefront of my mind, even if those students do not come from St. Bart's parish.

**QUESTION: What about the movement of the athletic association from St. Bart's to the school? Who suggested that and why is it being considered, and who makes the decision?**

ANSWER: The decision is in the best interests of the students, the school, and the parish. I proposed the decision primarily with the good of the students in mind. Currently, students from several different parishes play for the athletic association. Many students, parents, coaches, and some board officers of SBAA do not come from St. Bart's, but from other parishes connected with the school, such as St. Clare and OLR. Since many of the officers, coaches, and athletes have no connection with St. Bart's, instead with the school, it makes sense to align the student's athletic identity with an organization they are actually part of. The decision was communicated to the parish council and the finance council. Originally, the Archdiocese suggested SBAA move to the school during one of its regular parish audits. During one of those audits, several years ago, reviewing the bank accounts, they asked why St. Bart's has an account for the athletic association when the athletics are not in fact part of the parish. Prior pastors ignored the directives of the Archdiocesan audits, but I am trying to make sure that things are run in accord with standard procedures, Archdiocesan approval, efficiency, transparency, and above all, for the best interests of the children. The decision is currently being considered by the school board. We have checked with the Archdiocese and they are in agreement as well. Ultimately, the decision must be made by Fr. Henry and by Mrs. Roach, the JPPII principal.