



St. Bartholomew Parish
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From: Father Henry Hoffmann

Dear Parishioners of St. Bartholomew Church,

Happy Advent and New Church Year! With this new church year, I desire to facilitate new light and transparency that will lead to greater unity and more hope. I am writing today to update you about three items in particular. Before I go any farther, I would be remiss if I did not sing the praises of the Finance Council. They have devoted an extremely generous amount of time and energy and attention to getting a handle on our financial situation and a plan for the future. I am very impressed by their work and extremely grateful for their contributions. They have a big job on their hands, and they have risen to the challenge.

The reason we have a big job on our hands is that, as you know from previous communications, the financial condition of St. Bart's is precarious. I have been studying why that is the case, and want to update you on a few things. Without a Finance Council in place reporting to the Pastor for several years, financial resources were not managed as well as they could have been, communication was not as good as it could have been, and Sunday giving did not keep up with expenses. Given those realities, we face some challenges, but I think that we can face them together as a family of parishes and become stronger for it.

While we do have important work ahead of us, concrete actions have already been taken. We have hired a full-time maintenance professional dedicated to St. Bart's and are actively recruiting a Facilities Director to lead and oversee major projects across the family of parishes.

We are firmly committed to operating with a balanced budget. To achieve this, it is essential that Sunday Stewardship increases to more accurately support the true operating needs of our parish. With consultation and full support of the Finance Council, we have updated the budget number in the bulletin. The new number shows how much money we need to collect, instead of how much money we expect to collect. The Finance Council has written a letter which is attached to this one, which explains more.

Additionally, I would like to share two important updates. At my request, the Archdiocesan auditors recently conducted a focused review of St. Bart's finances. While the Archdiocese regularly audits all parishes on a routine schedule, I asked for this additional, extraordinary review due to specific questions I had regarding how certain bills were allocated and how funds were being spent. The auditors agreed to undertake this focused review as quickly as possible. Our regularly scheduled full audit will still take place in the spring as planned.

I am pleased to report that the testing completed this week found that bills were paid appropriately and that shared charges were allocated correctly. There were no material issues identified. Contracts appear to be properly fulfilled, shared expenses are being handled correctly between parishes, and we are receiving the services for which we are paying. There is one exception, which I will explain in the next paragraph.

The condition of the roof and the roof drains is the second item that I must bring to your attention, and make a retraction of information that I previously stated erroneously, for which error I apologize. The archdiocese

auditor inspected the roof and the drains, to make sure we got what we paid for. It turns out that the drains were replaced when the roof was replaced. So I was incorrect in the past, when I said that the roof drains were not replaced. I was given faulty information, and I didn't take the time to confirm until later. It turns out that 15 of the 16 drains were replaced in 2023 when the roof was replaced. The 16th drain was paid for, but not replaced, because it had been roofed over at some point in the past. The fact that this drain has been roofed over is a problem that has not been addressed for many years, as far as I can tell. Upon investigation, I have determined that a proper inspection of the work was not performed when the roof and the drains were replaced back in 2023 (which is why we paid for 16 drains but only got 15). The cost of the 16th drain is not a huge cost, just a little more than a thousand dollars, but the principle is important to me. With the exception of the 16th drain, the archdiocese auditor reported that the roof itself and the 15 open drains are in good condition, and we got what we paid for with them. It is worth noting, moreover, that the roofer generously gave the church a big discount on the drains.

The roof leaks continue, however, probably because of leaks in the pipes that run through the ceiling below the roof. These pipes run the water from the drains to the outside of the building, and they run through the ceiling, below the roof. The auditor suspects that these pipes need to be repaired or replaced. We will need to have a plumber scope the pipes, identify leaks, and determine whether we can repair or we should replace them. We also need to determine why the 16th drain was roofed over many years ago.

Again, I am very grateful for the Finance Council and the work they have done. They are working on a plan for deferred maintenance estimates and costs, and are preparing for a fuller report when that work is completed. They have begun to tackle the challenge with gusto, and I would encourage you to reach out to them and thank them for what they are doing for the church.

As we prepare to welcome the Lord at Christmas, let us make the most of this Advent season of preparation by cultivating ever greater trust in God's Providence, under the mantle and protection of our Lady, who is God's mother and ours. With her maternal care we can rejoice always in God's abundant blessings and find unity in hope.

Yours in Christ, with Mary,

Fr. Henry Hoffmann, Pastor