



**OUR LADY
OF RANSOM**
CATHOLIC CHURCH

JULY 2020-JUNE 2021

ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT





RENEWAL, COVID, & RESTORATION

When the good Lord calls me home and asks about my thoughts on my first go as pastor, I'll have a single word for Him - memorable. After taking over as pastor in Spring 2019, a global pandemic shut the world down. After that, our Renew My Church grouping was accelerated by two years, leading to a difficult once-in-a-lifetime discernment process. Add in the many physical plant issues - including losing heat in the Church on Christmas Day - and not only has the new pastor manual not been helpful, but I needed to burn it to stay warm in Church!



As a community, we have moved through many trials in a short period of time. If we are honest, we know we haven't come out unscathed, both as individuals and as a whole. But praise the Lord that this isn't an annual report for a business, but rather for a parish. The difference? As a parish we know that because the wounds of the crucifixion brought forth freedom and new life, the Lord can transform our wounds into sources of life and grace.

I ask that you join me in reading the stewardship report prepared by our parish leadership as we see how we can continue to become **fruitful disciples proclaiming freedom in Christ.**

F. Matthew R. Bojarsky

RENEW MY CHURCH

In winter 2020 we were activated for Renew My Church. The first phase grouped us with 5 other parishes. We had conversations about scenarios involving the merging of parishes, with the final result of Our Lady of Hope becoming a mission of Mary Seat of Wisdom. Benchmarks set by the Archdiocese for sustainable long-term parish renewal included average weekend Mass attendance of 750 and annual non-rental income of \$750k.



Our parish is now in Phase 3 - Building the New Reality. This phase focuses on **changing the structures within** parishes. Before activation, we had already made changes including establishing a **Senior Leadership Team** and **updating our staffing organization**. Soon we will begin a parishioner led **Parish Advisory Council**, the spiritual child of traditional Parish and Finance Councils. In the next year you can also expect: 1) More on the 6 traits of a disciple; 2) Additional ministries with approved Ministry Charters; and 3) Our 3rd Leadership Summit.

FINANCES: THE EFFECT OF COVID

The impact of the COVID pandemic has been dramatic. We have significant declines in Mass attendance, volunteer support, and financial giving. Taken together, **we can now neither provide the same level of resources as before, nor support our basic expenditures.** The

FIGURE 1: FYE21 EXPENSES

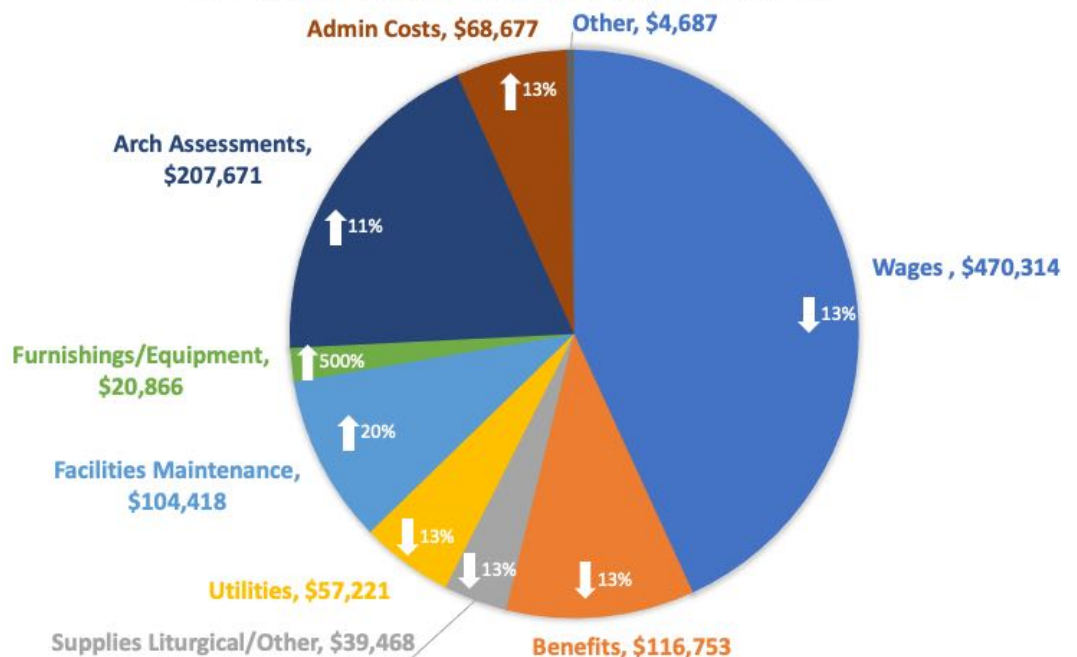
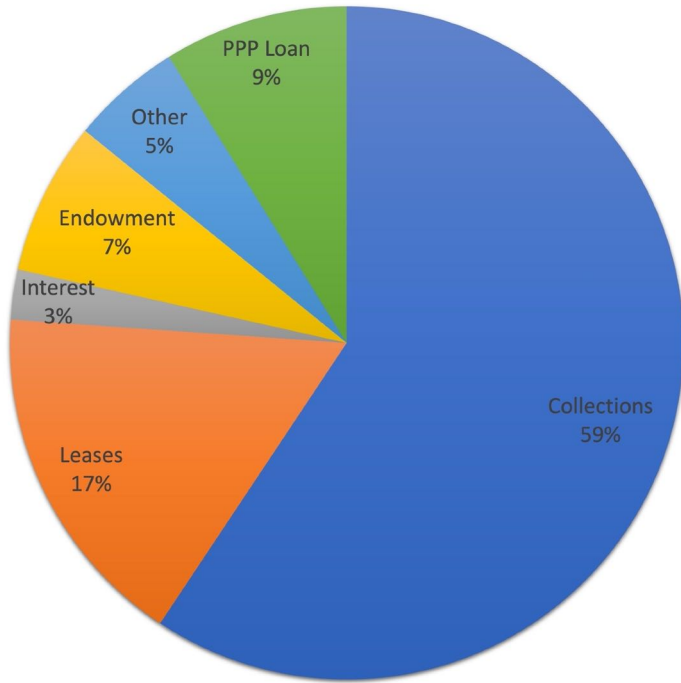


Figure 2: Income Sources



federal Paycheck Protection Program helped us bridge a significant gap in our FYE21 budget (the fiscal year that runs from July 2020 - June 2021). Nonetheless, our **cash reserves decreased by \$153k.**

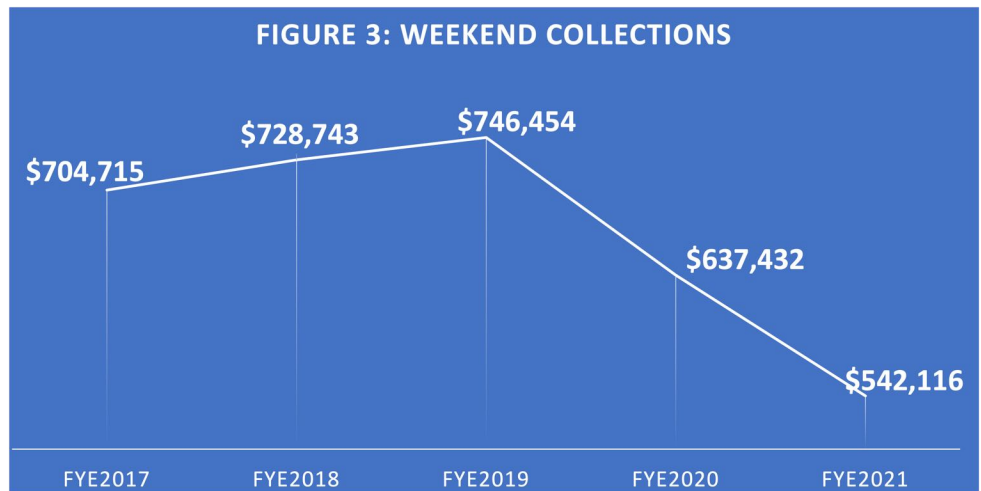
While we were able to reduce expenses, the combination of a **25% decrease in collections, 50% decrease in Christmas/ Easter collections, and several critical and unexpected emergency facilities projects** have been significant. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of our ordinary expenses for FYE21 and the percentage change versus FYE19 (the last non-COVID fiscal year).

Consider also that for years we have been financially unstable due to our dependence

on lease income from The Embers Academy and, recently, the Institute for Diaconal Studies. While our relationship with both of those institutions continues to be positive and mutually beneficial, **the Archdiocese considers dependence on lease income a sign of financial instability and cause for significant concern.** Figure 2 shows the sources of our income for FYE21.

Unsurprisingly, weekend collections make up the largest percentage of our giving. If we exclude our Christmas and Easter collections, we can see the impact that the COVID pandemic and subsequent changes

FIGURE 3: WEEKEND COLLECTIONS



in Mass attendance have had our on situation. Figure 3 shows our weekend collections for the past five years.

While we are waiting for exact data, **our trends seem to be in line with those being seen across the Archdiocese.** Our situation is, however, more problematic because: 1) Our online giving is well under the Archdiocese benchmark (OLR = 6%; Archdiocese target = 30%) and; 2) Our over-reliance on lease income prior to the pandemic. This is why we emphasize the importance of giving through **Give Central.**

Without significant, sustained increase in our Sunday collections, we will eventually deplete our savings and have to make drastic cuts across parish life. Unfortunately, because of the significant amount of deferred maintenance on our physical plant, our savings will not last as long as it could have. Yet if every parishioner increased their weekly giving by 10%, with those who can increasing their giving by 20%, we would immediately turn around our financial situation.

STEWARDSHIP: INVESTING IN MISSION

Regardless of our financial situation, **we will always prioritize investing in mission.** Finances, facilities and human resources are all at the service of the mission. To grow a healthy, vibrant, Christ-centered parish, it is essential that we invest in the individuals and resources that make that happen. In the parable of the talents, Jesus makes clear that spirits of protectionism and scarcity are not kingdom-driven attitudes. Rather, He expects us to invest the resources He has given us to: “Go, make disciples of all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Two years ago we began our **Pope St. John Paul II Evangelization Reserve Fund** to invest in important mission-focused experiences. Through donors and our quarterly “Evangelization Fund” envelope, we continue to sustain this fund. If you would like to make a one-time donation, please contact John McNally at john@olransom.org or (847) 823-2550. The JP II Fund has helped us invest in the following initiatives.

ALPHA



Our ALPHA process has quickly become a transformative experience for many in and outside of our community. Through this world-wide initiative, participants are offered an experience that helps them in their journey to the Lord - regardless of where they began.

ALPHA's strength comes from the simple honesty encouraged in the small groups. There are no right or wrong answers, just real people reflecting on their lives. As ALPHA continues to grow, we expect **all of our parishioners will participate in this important aspect of our parish community.**

THE FRUITFUL BRANCH

During FYE21, we had **three Fruitful Branch groups** meeting for fellowship, prayer and a deepening relationship with Jesus. These groups are targeted to people who are actively seeking the Lord and long to grow in their personal relationship with Him. As they mature as disciples, they find the grace needed to invite others into a saving relationship with Jesus.



SCHOOL OF SAINTHOOD

You can't educate someone into a relationship with God.

That obvious truth is the reason that most classroom based religious education programs fail to help children and their families become faithful, Mass attending Catholics. While our movement away from a classroom model was always in the works, the pandemic accelerated our plans. **Our new School of Sainthood is structured around accompanying parents and their children so that they have an encounter with the**

Risen Lord. Through this, they are invited to hear His call to surrender their lives to the God who went to death and back for them.

Many of our long-time parishioners have remarked about the **increase in young families and young adults** in our parish. This is in part due to both our School of Sainthood and the next missional area where we invest our resources, sacred music.



SACRED MUSIC

Through the leadership of our talented Director of Music Ministry, **our parish has quickly grown in its ability to offer some of the most beautiful and elevating music in the area.** From regionally sought after choristers, to chanted Vespers and Compline, Our Lady of Ransom is becoming a local destination for those who seek music from the fullness of the Catholic tradition and long for prayer that elevates their worship experience. Through this we have drawn young people who hunger for a transcendent beauty that our culture cannot give them. It takes financial resources to run this type of music program, but we know that the Lord is never outdone in generosity, so **investing in our worship of Him is the best investment we can make.**

EMPOWERING & EQUIPPING LEADERS

In renewal efforts across both the Archdiocese and the Catholic world, there is a spiritual principle that has been recovered called **spiritual multiplication.** It is "recovered" insofar as it was the model of ministry for Jesus and the early Church. The Gospels tell us that Jesus disproportionately invested His time in the Twelve. They, in turn, went out and helped others have an



encounter with the Risen Lord. Those individuals did the same and here we sit some 2000 years later with Christianity having spread throughout the world. The principle of spiritual multiplication means that the more we invest in empowering individuals, the further the effects of our efforts will spread.

At Our Lady of Ransom, we believe that one of the most important things we can do for long-term sustainable renewal is to raise up our parishioners as leaders. Clergy and staff come and go; it is our parishioners who are best equipped to continue and grow the mission that Jesus Christ has given us. We could have the best priests and staff in the country, but without the investment of time, talent and treasures from our community, we will see the same decline so prevalent of most parishes in the West.



Second only to the structural changes we have made, we prioritize investing in

raising up and empowering our parishioners as leaders. From formation opportunities to professional growth and development, to invest in individuals is to engage in ministry in a Christ-like way.

THE GRACE OF THE SACRAMENTS

As we reflect on our stewardship of resources, one area we cannot overlook is our clergy. They have a unique role in our community and, while each brings different gifts, we want to make sure that we utilize their time well.

As a precept of the Church, regular confession is required for one to consider themselves a practicing Catholic, so we want to make sure that everyone has easy access to this sacrament of healing and life. In FYE21, we increased the days and times we offer the sacrament of confession. **Our priests now hear confessions for approximately four hours a week, and the demand is even higher.** So many individuals making use of confession is a sign that the time of our priests is being used in a fruitful way.

FINANCES: DEFERRED MAINTENANCE

Many of you were involved in the amazing renovation of our Church and have thereby contributed to the beautiful worship space we have. You gave your time, talents and treasures for that important work and for that we are grateful. Thank you!

We are now at the point in the history of our parish where there needs to be greater attention paid to the rest of our physical plant. **Due to significant deferred maintenance and a lack of preventative care, we continue to have major and urgent facilities issues.** In FYE21, the following emergency projects were undertaken:

- 1) Replacement of water damaged electrical distribution system for Church and school;
- 2) Urgent masonry work on the Ministry Center to prevent pedestrian hazards and further water damage;
- 3) Replacement of heating controls in the S-wing of the school due to the failure of the original system;
- 4) Emergency replacement of the hot water coil that supplies heat to the Church;
- 5) Urgent shoring up and rebuilding of the main structural supports in the basement of the school.

Moreover, we anticipate additional urgent projects, including:

- 1) Emergency roof repairs to the school, Church and Ministry Center;
- 2) Replacement of heating controls in the school's N-wing due to the partial failure of the original system.

While we are currently in the process of obtaining a scope of work and bids for these projects, we know their financial impact will be significant.

STEWARDSHIP OF TIME: SERVING GOD THROUGH HIS CHURCH

As our long-time parishioners know, for decades most of our ministries have been led by the same individuals, and our volunteer and service support has been done by a small group. As a parish, **we are grateful for their service and dedication**, and we would not

be where we are if it wasn't for their service. A willingness to serve without counting the cost is an important way of living in the truth that our life is not about us.

The downside of this approach is that when those who have served for a long time step away, the parish and many of its ministries struggle. The past year has found us experiencing this reality in many areas of parish life. Many of our long-serving ministry leaders and volunteers took the pandemic as an opportunity to step away from their responsibilities, leaving sudden and significant gaps in our ability to sustain aspects of our parish. The challenging truth is that without a new generation of parishioners stepping up and into volunteer and service roles, many parts of parish life that we are accustomed to will no longer exist.

AREAS OF NEEDED GROWTH - YOUR ROLE

While we are not lacking for signs of spirit-driven renewal, there are substantial challenges that we face in continuing our mission of **engaging seekers, enlivening believers, and empowering disciples**. For years now, our financial situation has been less than ideal, with too much dependence on rental income, too low of collections to properly staff a parish this size, and a significant amount of deferred maintenance. With the pandemic and its impacts, our financial situation has quickly become critical. While the leadership of Our Lady of Ransom can strategize, plan and invite, the decision is yours as to our ability to become a mission-driven parish.



As you've heard our pastor say many times, God has written it into the system that we are dependent upon one another. While our challenges seem overwhelming, they are insignificant compared to what can be done with a communion of persons who are open to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. If each person reading this would take a few actions **today**, these challenges would evaporate and we could unleash our full potential.

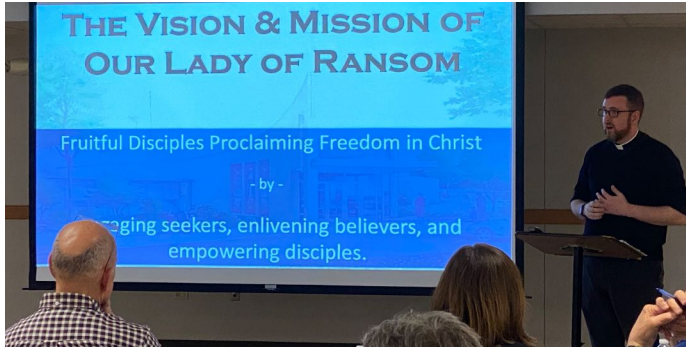
- 1) **Increase your weekend giving by 10%.** If you give \$1 per week, give \$1.10. If you give \$100 per week, give \$110. If each parishioner made this change, it would have a tremendously positive impact on collections.
- 2) Sign up for giving through **Give Central**. We know many prefer to use envelopes, but between their \$15,000 per year cost, and our percentage of electronic giving being 1/5th of what the Archdiocese expects, the more parishioners who sign up for Give Central, the better our financial situation. If you need help doing this, please contact our Business Manager, John McNally, at john@olransom.org or (847)823-2550.
- 3) **Choose one or two areas of the parish to volunteer your time.** It is easy for us to take for granted that the ministries and resources we enjoy will always be present, but they will not be if we lack the parishioner support needed to sustain them.

LAST THOUGHTS FROM OUR PASTOR

If you're like me, you read the above stewardship report with an odd combination of joyful gratitude and mild nausea. There are admittedly challenges that we must attend to sooner rather than later.

As your pastor, **I promise you that we will be good stewards of your money and time.** Growing up in a single-parent household, I know what it's like to struggle from paycheck to paycheck. Because of that, I am clearly aware of the sacrifice that many of you make to share with the parish the money the Lord has given you. It's why I'm hesitant to ask you for more. I can, however, promise that whatever you give will be taken care of in the same way that I would want my mom's charitable contributions handled.

A few weeks ago, one of our leadership teams was having a conversation about how our community has been experiencing the renewal that we are striving to bring about. They spoke of recent experiences that they had where our parishioners have come up to them, unsolicited, and spoke of noticing a change in the atmosphere of our parish. They spoke of feeling a welcoming spirit and hearing positive conversations that they haven't heard before. That's not because of me, that's not because of our leadership - **that's because the Holy Spirit is on the move in our parish.**



As we continue to **engage seekers, enliven believers, and empower disciples**, we will always keep our eyes focused on the purpose behind everything we do - to help all of you come to a deep, personal, saving relationship with Jesus Christ. He is why we are here. He is why we do what we do.

F. Matthew R. Bojarsky



Fruitful disciples proclaiming freedom in Christ

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