

# STATE OF THE PARISH HOMILY ST RAPHAEL CATHOLIC CHURCH

*June 23/24, 2018*

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As it is my custom every June or July, I offer you my annual report on the status of our parish. As always, this report includes where we are financially as we end this fiscal year, our accomplishments this past year, and a little about what to expect for our next fiscal year. Before going into the details of this homily, know that this past fiscal year was yet another challenging year for us with lots of twists and turns which have affected almost every aspect of this annual report.

## **THE NUMBERS:**

I start off with good news. This time last year, I stood up in front of all of you telling you that we were forecasting a deficit of **\$75,400**. The basic reason for that deficit was 3 priests serving here at St. Raphael. In August, the bishop asked me to become pastor of St. Joseph in Tontitown while retaining the parish of St Raphael in Springdale. At first, the bishop sent us additional help. Father Michael Bass arrived to help cover the additional Masses at St. Joseph and Tontitown would cover the cost of the 4<sup>th</sup> priest, still leaving us with a **\$75,000** deficit. Shortly after arriving, Father Michael Bass left us and the priesthood. At that point, I told the bishop that the 3 of us could handle both parishes.

However, Tontitown would still cover the cost of one priest; which then cut into our deficit by **\$44,000**.

This year, the “other revenues” category (which is revenue that is not Sunday Collections, Building Fund donations or ministries monies) was better than budgeted due to many reasons, including our appeal to replace the sewer pump. Therefore, we are projecting only a deficit of **\$10,300** at the end of this fiscal year, which is about **\$65,000** better than what was projected originally.

I want to thank each of you for your generosity for making this possible and my former associates, Father Will and Father Ramsés, for taking on the extra work and sacrifices necessary; thus saving the parish money. In this new fiscal year 2019, we are projecting a deficit of about **\$12,600**. I really think we can make up this loss throughout the year and so I am not too worried about this small deficit. As in the past, I ask you to please remember your weekly or monthly contributions. When you forget or do not donate to St Raphael, we face deficits because we must continue to pay our bills.

Our building collection continues to be very good. We continue to receive monthly what is necessary to pay our loans to the diocese. We used the extra donations this past year to pay off the renovation loan last September which had a balance of **\$36,989**. As of June 30<sup>th</sup>, the

balance of our construction loan is **\$779,883**. It is now under a million dollars and my hope is to have this loan paid off by the end of 2020. Again, thank you for your continued support and generosity.

### **THIS PAST YEAR'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

This past year began with receiving two new associates. I had intentions of completing many projects and doing many good things here at the parish, but then August came and we were given the responsibility of St Joseph in Tontitown. I became pastor of St Joseph at a difficult time in their history. Their pastor, Father Greg Hart, was very ill and was dying and they were receiving 3 priests from up the street which created a lot of uncertainty. Because of this, my time as well as my associates has been divided between two parishes; and administrating two parishes has taken a toll on my time and my ability to complete projects in a timely manner.

Our Wedding Manual is complete in English and available on our webpage, as well as our Funeral Guide in English. Both of these documents are meant to be guides to understand the church's teaching; as well as to give the couples and families details of the rites and reading options. The Funeral Guide also has prayers that a family can pray when their beloved is dying. The Spanish versions of both of these documents will be available in a few months.

We were able to complete our *V Encuentro* pastoral plan and turn it over to the diocese by late summer. I thank Jonathan Ramirez for making this possible. *V Encuentro* moves to the national level in September with a final document from our bishops in 2019.

I also talked with the Charismatic leadership team and have asked them to reinitiate our Guardian Angels program, and to be responsible for its implementation. Hopefully, we will have our Guardian Angels back in service at the 8:30 am and 12:30 pm Mass this fall.

We had very successful fundraisers and parish gatherings over the year. SummerFest went well, as well as Brewtober Chilifest. Father Will initiated our SCRIP program, in which you can purchase gift cards from us and we get a percentage back while you get the full face value of the card. See the bulletin for more details. Deacon Chuck and Anita started their STEP (Stop to Eat Program) program, which is a free lunch program on First Fridays for those in need. I am very grateful to their devotion to our parish and to the poor during his 25 years of diaconate.

We had another successful year with “Catholics Returning Home” under the leadership of Deacon Dan Cashman. Every year, this program welcomes back a handful of individuals who have been away from the church. Our resource center is now complete in its new location to the

left of the entrance to the office and is available to all our parishioners with resources both in English and Spanish.

We did eliminate our parochial soccer league for a few years to evaluate its impact on the parish. The wear and tear on our grounds, as well as our facilities, plus having one employee dedicated to it almost full time was too taxing on the parish and our employee.

Our bride's room was renovated to provide a more intimate space for small groups, spiritual direction and grief counseling. Of course, it still serves as a place for brides, but now provides additional space for the increasing number of spiritual directions which are happening at St. Raphael. It was Father Will's inspiration but the room was really designed, organized and completed by Dee Lea. Thank you Dee for all your hard work to make this a beautiful new quiet space at St. Raphael.

We did have two major purchases this year. In December, after 25 years, our sewer pump gave out and because of your generosity we were able to install a new pump with no ill effect on our budget. Then again in April, we installed a new sound system which corrected the 2.4 second delay in the church and improved sound quality tremendously. Your generosity to the Building Fund makes this quite large expense (\$38,000) possible without taking a loan with the diocese.

There have been a few changes to our staff in the past several weeks. I am not sure whether you know that after 16 years, Sherry McAfee, our Office Manager retired on June 6<sup>th</sup>. For me, Sherry was that wonderful face in our parish, always welcoming, calm and professional. She has been the manager under three pastors and the many changes in this parish, and has always dealt with changes admirably and professionally. Her love of people and her desire to serve our church have made her an outstanding member of my staff. Her wisdom, patience and key understanding of the needs of our parishioners will be truly missed. Lizzette Castrellon is now our new Office Manager. I look forward to working with her, and like Sherry, Lizzette has the warm and welcoming personality that is so wonderful to have as the face of the parish. There have been a few changes to the job descriptions in the office due to this change but no new faces. Of course, we have two new associates, Father Rajasekhar Chittem and Father Daniel Ramos. They are #13 and #14 in a long line of associates. Don't get too comfortable with them. In the blink of eye, they will be gone. I look forward to working with them over this next year and to see what they will bring our parish during their time here with us. They, like my previous 12 associates, will bring their own set of blessings to our parish.

## **THIS UPCOMING YEAR EVENTS**

This year, Summer Fest will be held on Sunday, August 19<sup>th</sup>. The event will remain the same as it has been in the past; for families of all ages with games, food, music, hay rides and helicopter rides, but no alcohol.

Our Fifth annual Brewtober Chilifest is set for Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup>. Like years past this event is for adults 21 and older and will feature Craft Beer sampling, live music, a silent auction, homemade chili and bratwurst. Awards will be given to both the best beer entry and chili entry.

Guadalupe celebrations, Posadas and Via Crucis will continue under the leadership of Father Ramos. We will also have our Biennial Stewardship fair in February of 2019.

With two new associates, two parishes and another year older, I am at the point where I do not want to bite more than I can chew. I do plan to work on a Baptismal Guide for our parish, which will complete the documents most needed and most requested. It will include the Church's teaching on Baptism, the rite of Baptism and parish guidelines.

I will ask both of my associates to continue to work with the formation of our Catechists and our Altar Servers.

Last year, I told you that with 3 priests, we should have less cancelation of Masses and Confessions, but that was before we took on another parish. Effective this week, at both St. Joseph in Tontitown and St. Raphael in Springdale, each parish bulletin will post the Confession and Mass schedule of both parishes. You will see in St. Raphael's bulletin the schedule for St. Joseph in Tontitown. My reason for this is when my associates are out of town (I've also learned after 12 associates, they go away much more than your pastor!!), I do not want to run around trying to cover so many Masses. This will allow me to cancel a few Masses here and there when they are both out of town (which they will be) and will still be able to go to Mass either here at St. Raphael or St. Joseph in Tontitown.

There is no big project this year. The rectory did not get approval to be renovated, so any small improvements we make at the rectory will not affect the budget this year or in the years to come because the funds will come from the Building Fund collection.

## **MY DREAM LIST**

We still may look into a Video Projection Control system. It would be a good addition to our church and will work right alongside our new

sound system. It is a little pricey at \$50,000, so if you would like to see this happen, let us know. I am also looking at a big project next summer. The walls down the main hallway, outside St. Raphael Hall, are in horrible shape and just painting them and filling in holes would be a temporary fix. Since most of the damage is lower than 4 feet or so, I am looking into some type of Faux brick wall to use on the lower half in every area that has sheet rock. I will keep you informed. This would be a very expensive project, but would extend the life of our facility and I think it would look very nice.

I still dream of a “*Cappuccino Corner.*” outside our Book and Gift Shop and an “LED sign” on Sunset to announce the good things happening at St. Raphael. I have said this for a few years now, but it is still a dream.

## **IN CONCLUSION:**

As I complete my ninth fiscal year here with you all, I continue to make this promise to you: I am here for you; Father Ramos and Father Raj are here for you. There will always be many changes as our parish moves forward on its journey of faith, but I remain committed as your pastor. I love this parish and what it stands for. As I said before, I am not going anywhere because I believe in each of you and what we can

do together. I believe our best days are ahead of us and I believe that our Lord is with us always.

I want to thank my wonderful staff. I am truly blessed to have each and every one of you working for our parish. Thank you.

As I say every year, as your pastor, I realize that I am not in control of events or what will happen in the future; our Heavenly Father is. For that I am eternally grateful because I am only His servant. I place our parish in His hands every night and pray for each and every one of you. Our complete financial report, with actual figures for this past fiscal year and our new budget figures for this new fiscal year, will be available in the bulletin in July or August. A copy of this State of the Parish report is available on our webpage now and a link will be sent out in next week's Trumpet. Thank you for your support and may God bless our parish and our families. To Him be the glory forever. Amen