



## Spirit of Christ Mission

June 29, 2014

**THE FEAST OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL**

To the People of Spirit of Christ Mission:

I write to share concerns regarding the financial stability of our parish of Spirit of Christ Mission and to respond to some other concerns heard "via the grapevine."

The proposed 2014/2015 budget has been approved and submitted to the Diocese by the Spirit of Christ Finance Council with my approval and the approval of John Fuchs, Finance Council Chair. The budget has subsequently been endorsed by Bishop Thomas. The complete budget is available for your review on the parish website: [blessedtrinitymissoula.org](http://blessedtrinitymissoula.org) (click on the Stewardship button).

The approved budget projects a 12% (\$9,066) increase over the stewardship envelope income for last fiscal year (July 1, 2013-June 30, 2014). This increase is necessary for the following reasons:

### **ON THE INCOME SIDE:**

1. The payments we have received from the Diocese for our generous support of the Diocesan Capital Campaign, From Age to Age, have been completed (last year we received \$3,356). We will no longer receive this "added income" which we used for ordinary expenses.
2. Due to the Diocese of Helena Chapter 11 bankruptcy we will not have access to our parish savings in the Diocesan Deposit and Loan account. Last year we withdrew \$5,000 to cover shortfalls in parish stewardship income.
3. Due to the Diocesan Chapter 11 Bankruptcy *all interest paid on parish savings accounts with the Diocese has been suspended*. Last year (2012/13) we received \$4,057 on our parish savings. This fiscal year (2013/14) we have received only \$1,911 (before the "no interest policy" went into effect). In the new fiscal year (2014/15) there will be *no interest* paid on our parish savings.
4. The John Moe Endowment Fund for Youth Ministry is now depleted. We had received an annual gift from that fund of \$1,045 (the last of which was this past fiscal year).
5. Numbers 1-4 leave a total of \$11,312 no longer available.

### **ON THE EXPENSE SIDE:**

1. For the most part, the various expenses required to operate Spirit of Christ have not been increased (other than anticipated incremental increases such as electricity, etc.).
2. The Diocesan Assessment has been increased beginning July 1, 2014 from 9% (\$5,196) to 12½% (\$5,326). *All parishes and missions of the diocese pay an annual assessment to the Diocese based on a percentage of parish income*. The reason for this increase is largely due to the current "diocesan financial crisis."
3. Unexpected expenses last year included snow removal, i.e., \$2,093 parking lot and \$1,455 for the church roof. These amounts are NOT included in this year's budget, but could be an unanticipated expense again. Total 2014/15 budget for snow removal is \$1,200.
4. Beginning July 1, 2014, BUILDING INSURANCE MUST BE PAID MONTHLY directly to Catholic Mutual Insurance Company. Previously the Diocese would cover this expense until the parish could pay the premium. This is no longer possible (total monthly premium is currently \$208 per month).

## STAFF EXPENSES FOR SPIRIT OF CHRIST

The finance council does not recommend any changes in the current “staffing” at Spirit of Christ. In addition to the Pastor, operations and administration requires the current staff arrangements which have been in place for many years.

- ❖ **CHERYL RUSSELL, PARISH COORDINATOR.** Cheryl coordinates Spirit of Christ Faith Formation programs and events; prepares the Sunday Liturgy; coordinates building use and parish volunteers; assists in the preparation of liturgical ministers; designs and coordinates the worship environment; meets regularly with Blessed Trinity Staff; coordinates Blessed Trinity and Spirit of Christ events and calendar. Cheryl’s ten hour per week salary is paid by Spirit of Christ.
- ❖ **CAROL MURPHY, FINANCIAL SERVICES COORDINATOR** for Blessed Trinity/Spirit of Christ. Carol is the Spirit of Christ “bookkeeper.” She tracks the budget, pays bills, communicates with Spirit of Christ Finance Council, prepares the parish budget and the annual financial statement. A portion of Carol’s salary (2/7<sup>th</sup>) is paid by Spirit of Christ.
- ❖ **SISTER MARY JO QUINN, BLESSED TRINITY/SPIRIT OF CHRIST PASTORAL ASSISTANT.** S. Mary Jo directs and coordinates the liturgy and liturgical music ministry at Blessed Trinity and Spirit of Christ; designs and prepares the weekly worship aid. She also coordinates the parish outreach ministry, liturgical ministry schedules and works with the Spirit of Christ Advisory Council (which will be re-constituted this Fall). A portion (2/7<sup>th</sup>) of Sister Mary Jo’s salary is paid by Spirit of Christ. Included in this 2/7<sup>th</sup> are the services provided to Spirit of Christ by the Blessed Trinity Office staff, most notably Carol Lemieux—a portion of her salary is NOT paid by Spirit of Christ—that portion is included in S. Mary Jo’s salary. Services provided by Carol and the Blessed Trinity Office to Spirit of Christ include preparation, design and printing of the weekly bulletin; printing the weekly worship aid and preparing all mailings for Spirit of Christ; and providing any necessary secretarial services for Spirit of Christ. ALSO INCLUDED in the 2/7<sup>th</sup> of S. Mary Jo’s salary are the services provided by Blessed Trinity Faith Formation Coordinator Louise Yamasaki, which includes collaborating with Cheryl Russell on the design, planning and implementation of the Parish Faith Formation yearly theme and schedule.
- ❖ **DANIEL HAMPSON.** Daniel assists with the music ministry. Spirit of Christ pays two hours weekly of his salary for this service.

## STEWARDSHIP

We do not GIVE because there is a NEED; we GIVE because we NEED to GIVE. That basic and fundamental principle of Catholic Stewardship flows from the Gospel of Christ which reminds us again and again in varying ways that everything we have is a gift from God: given by God to us, to be given again for the sake of others.

The gift we offer is presented, each Sunday, at the Lord’s Table—that gift is (and must be) the “sacrifice we offer” which we ask the Lord to accept. So what we give and how we give and why we give is important—a significant element of our faith and a necessary aspect of our worship. Good Stewardship is a significant decision. We are lovingly invited to give in proportion to what we have—our time, our talent, and our financial resources. Some of us already do that, and do it very well with a generous and kind heart. Some of us do the very best we can, even in the midst of financial struggles. We all need to be reminded of how important our gift is to the very life and future of our small faith community, which we have named “Spirit of Christ.” Our giving must be done in “the Spirit of Christ!”

It is instructive to review the “giving patterns” of parishioners at Spirit of Christ this past year (2013/14):

Currently there are **55 households** who receive Stewardship Envelopes

(6 households have asked not to receive envelopes, though they continue to contribute.)

20% (12 households) made no contribution.

18% (11 households) contributed an average of \$ 13.18 per week (**\$ 1.20 per household**)

23% (14 households) contributed an average of \$ 75.08 per week (**\$ 5.37 per household**)

10% ( 6 households) contributed an average of \$ 84.37 per week (**\$14.07 per household**)

16% (10 households) contributed an average of \$218.20 per week(**\$21.82 per household**)

13% ( 8 households) contributed an average of \$332.12 per week (**\$41.50 per household**)

These figures are the SUNDAY Stewardship Envelope Offerings ONLY and do not include “loose collection,” Special Christmas and Easter Collections.

**THE AVERAGE CONTRIBUTION OF ALL THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTE IS \$11.85 per week.  
IN ORDER FOR THE APPROVED 2014/15 BUDGET TO BE MET  
each household who currently contributes must increase  
their weekly or monthly (and their Christmas and Easter contribution) by  
at least 10% beginning July 1, 2014.**

**THIS IS A SMALL AMOUNT WHEN ADDED TO EACH HOUSEHOLD'S AVERAGE WEEKLY CONTRIBUTION.**

***\$137 additional increase in the average total weekly offering; OR \$593 additional per month  
is essential in order to maintain current parish operations and services.***

***This means EACH WEEK our stewardship envelope income must be: \$1,077.***

- ❖ It is important to note that as of June 20, 2014 Spirit of Christ is THREE MONTHS behind in payments due to Blessed Trinity. This, of course will need to be made up in the new fiscal year.
- ❖ Stewardship offerings must be consistent, that is weekly or monthly.
- ❖ Those who do not regularly contribute (12 households) are invited to please consider making a regular offering. If that is not possible please consider a generous one time offering to assist in the life and ministry of your faith community.
- ❖ Please remember you can have your monthly Stewardship offering automatically deducted from your account. The form is available on the website ([blessedtrinitymissoula.org](http://blessedtrinitymissoula.org) – click on the “Stewardship” Button) or you may call Blessed Trinity parish office to apply.
- ❖ When away from the parish, it is still important to make your regular Stewardship offering.
- ❖ The future of our parish of Spirit of Christ depends on our ability to meet the necessary financial requirements of being a mission parish. A generous response to Stewardship is needed.

#### **OTHER CONCERNS HEARD VIA “THE GRAPEVINE!”**

- ❖ **VOLUNTEER MINISTRY.** There has been discussion among some at Spirit Christ that the parish should be an “all-volunteer” parish (indicating a view that no staff should be paid—other than the priest). In fact, some have suggested this was the original intent at the mission’s founding. Sharing in the life and ministry of the parish is fundamental to being part of any faith community. Giving of time and talent is part and parcel of what it means to be Catholic and to be a Catholic parish. The life-blood of any Catholic parish is about “full, conscious and active participation” in the life and ministry of the faith community. The responsibility of a “paid” staff is to enable such participation to occur; to assure that many, if not all, parishioners are actively involved; and to provide good preparation, support and education for the ministry in which they are chosen to volunteer. Parishioners, on the other hand, have the responsibility to engage in the ministry of the parish, offering time and talent for the sake of the community; to support those who attempt to coordinate those efforts; and to engage in the necessary preparation for a given ministry. For this to happen effectively and responsibly a professional staff is not only needed but essential. The ministry of the Church is valued and that value must be expressed in the quality of the ministry we provide and the willingness of all to participate. Spirit of Christ has at its disposal rich resources in such leadership expertise. For this we are grateful!
- ❖ *“There should be more fund-raising events or we should contribute only to specific projects or when there is a clear need for something.”* This is not a Catholic approach to Stewardship and presents significant challenges in terms of meeting ongoing and necessary needs for the life of our faith community. Consistent, generous and responsive support for the parish requires regular weekly or monthly financial contribution. Stewardship income should provide for all needs and ministry in the parish. Good stewardship is the responsibility of all parishioners according to the means and ability of each parish household.
- ❖ *“People have left our parish or are no longer here on a regular basis. There are few families, children and young people.”* This is true for a variety of reasons.
  - (a) The most prevailing reason seems to be the time of Sunday Mass. Some claim this is an unreasonable time—too early, too hard to “get there,” etc. If it were possible to return to

9:00 a.m. (*only one hour later*) that may inspire others to attend again, though that is only speculative. At any rate, at the present time, 8:00 a.m. is not negotiable.

- (b) The lack of regular attendance at Sunday Mass is a national phenomenon and is certainly evident in all the Missoula parishes as well (and there are a variety of reasons for that. For many, Sunday Mass is simply not a priority—other events are given more importance in the life of persons and family. Sunday Mass is all too often considered to be “optional”). The need for more effective outreach ministry, a greater sense of hospitality and a developed and strong sense of “mission” for each parish is an essential component, a discussion we hope to have at both Blessed Trinity and Spirit of Christ in the year to come.
- (c) *Why can't we sing the old songs?* All the “old songs” were once “new songs!” The quality of the liturgy and the music at both Spirit of Christ and Blessed Trinity is a priority for the pastoral staff. The liturgy of the Catholic Church cannot be properly celebrated quickly, nor can the text of the hymns of liturgical songs be taken lightly—we can only sing what the Church believes! The music must always both support and enhance the ritual action of the liturgy and the particular liturgical season. The ongoing development of the music ministry continues to be a need in terms of singers, cantors and musicians. However, those who lead the music, prepare it and participate are strong in their commitment, dedication and abilities. The assembly is always to be considered the primary “music minister” and our current musical leadership has enabled that to happen.
- (d) The homily is always well prepared and based on the Gospel. This is true when given by the pastor or the deacons.
- (e) Others have left simply because they have chosen to no longer go to Mass on a regular basis; others have chosen to go to another parish because they “do not like the priest and/or other staff members;” “do not like the faith formation program;” do not like the preaching or the music, or because they have been offended by fellow parishioners, or because their friends are no longer going, etc. etc. Many others have simply moved to another city or state.

Thank you for taking the time to read and reflect on this lengthy letter. It is my desire to schedule a time, in the not too distant future, to gather as a parish to discuss these issues and to receive your response and/or concerns directly.

While these are challenging times for all of us, they are also filled with opportunity and potential. We are a people of faith and that makes us into a community of hope, always asking the question, “What more can we do and how can we do it with the highest quality and deepest conviction, for the sake of the mission of Christ in this place.”

**GOD'S ABIDING PEACE AND THE LOVING "SPIRIT OF CHRIST" BE WITH EACH OF YOU.**

Sincerely,



Father Ed Hislop, Pastor

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