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Companions on the Journey

September 19, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

Today is Stewardship Sunday and there is an insert in the Paduan, a comparison of last year's Budget to Actual for the parish. One of the things you will notice as you examine the income and the expenses, is that we had a surplus last year. A pretty large surplus. Easily the largest surplus in my thirty years as pastor. A substantial surplus in the midst of an eighteen-month pandemic outbreak? Yes. BUT.

We had a surplus for two very important reasons. You, the faithful parishioners of Saint Anthony, stepped up—big time. And the second reason is that in the last eighteen months we have received over a half million dollars from the Federal Government, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Montgomery County. The lion-share of that from the Federal Government. It was so helpful and enabled us to weather the storm of the pandemic and keep our doors open and our services flowing and our assistance alive.

That kind of additional financial support has ended and we cannot rely on such an influx this year. If you were to remove those funds from last year and this year, the picture would be very different. And it would be a toss-up as to whether we finished in the black or the red as a parish. Aware of that, I have decided to move forward, after consultation with the various parish Committees, with our every-other year Increased Offertory Reminder. We ask each parish contributor, whether as individual or family, to review what you give, examine what your present financial situation is and then ask you to increase your level of financial support to Saint Anthony's.

I have great trust in you to make just the right assessment and just the right increase. I do ask. I do not worry. I do trust that the Lord will inspire you to make the best decision for you and the parish. More importantly than the monetary support, however, is your physical presence. Many have returned. There have been no outbreaks here at Saint Anthony's. People are good—and careful. Many more need to return. We do need to start to make the effort to return to the practice of the faith, to return to communal prayer at Mass, and to receive the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

You have missed Holy Communion. Live-streaming has been a God-send but it can only do so much. Spiritual Communion are genuine opportunities to connect with Our Lord. But nothing compares to the Real Presence. Nothing compares to being here. Jesus is really with us. Jesus is really present. Jesus has left himself to us as food for our spiritual and physical journey through this life. We need to return to Eucharist. We need the sacraments. Reconciliation. Eucharist. And what is more—our children need the sacraments. They need to gather as a family, as a community to be with others gathered at the table of the Lord. It has been too long. It is time to return. Slowly. Slowly. But one Sunday at a time. Please ask the Lord to help you to make this decision and we will be waiting for you.

In the peace of Christ,

Msgr. McHenry