



ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC CHURCH

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

ENCOUNTERING CHRIST. ENCOURAGING FAITH. ENLIVENING HEARTS.

Dear Parishioners of St. Thomas,

In the letter to the Hebrews, we hear how “faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen (Heb 11:1).” Over the years at St. Thomas, believers have put their faith in action and have given evidence of their hope in God and all His promises in Christ Jesus. Actions of faith reflect the stewardship and mission God has entrusted to us.

Since coming to St. Thomas in 2009, I have witnessed the parish overcome a 2.5 million dollar debt through our **Faithful to our Heritage** campaign, begin to build financial stability, and then go on to complete a 2.8 million dollar **Witness to Hope** Capital Campaign that helped both the Diocese of Lansing and our parish fulfill its mission of service. For our part, those monies went to various capital expenses like repairing roofs, parking lots, sidewalks, repairing leaks, and sealing the walls and windows of the Church. We beautified the interior by installing new lighting and adding new murals that reveal the story of our patron, St. Thomas. Through it all, parishioners of St. Thomas have been generous in their week-to-week support of the work that is constantly going on at the parish.

In spite of the pandemic, we did what we could to come together and worship the Lord.

Our school continues to grow and the enthusiasm for Classical Education is so strong, that parents want to see it continue into the high school years. This coming fall will see the addition of a 9th grade!

None of this could happen without your support and putting your faith in action.

As we come out of this pandemic, it is time we focus our stewardship efforts even more towards building up the Body of Christ at St. Thomas. The pandemic affected us all and still continues to exert its lingering influence. Some still feel isolated and reluctant to engage in community life. Yet, we have been made for God and His eternal family. Jesus came to bring us the Kingdom, and the Lord wants His banquet hall filled! He unites Himself to us, and empowers us by the Spirit to go make disciples. To do this requires the sacrifice of our time, talents, and treasure.

I am asking each of you to participate in the **Faithful to Our Mission** stewardship effort beginning this fall. While our parish is doing well, we could be serving in far greater ways. As Jesus said, “The harvest is abundant, but laborers are few!” We have the students of the University of Michigan surrounding us. How many of them have heard the Good News of God’s salvation?

We know the college years can be difficult and sadly many students lose their faith during those years. Let it not be so!



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Yet, to reach them, we need laborers! Our parish staff does what it can. I am grateful for all of them because they work here despite the low pay. Yet, they could do more and we could retain more of our ministers if we were able to compensate them with a more livable wage. A part of the **Faithful to our Mission** effort will be to increase the financial support we give all our paid staff, so they know they are valued and can make St. Thomas their home.

A good steward of the Lord recognizes the gift of being entrusted with so much! God puts into the steward's heart wisdom to know this and a desire to offer their very self back to God just as Jesus did. Stewardship, therefore, includes the offering of our time and talents in service of God's Kingdom. We have thousands of registered parishioners and many of you are involved in various ways. The entire parish staff is grateful for your participation in the work and ministry here. But it is important for each of us to understand that we can do so much more!

Often, staff can feel overwhelmed and weary because we ask for "volunteers" and get few. Jesus does not ask for volunteers! Imagine, "Hey, who would like to volunteer to spread the Kingdom of God and save people from certain eternal death?" No. It is a ridiculous thought.

If we are Christians, we know that Christ's mission is our own.

We all have the privilege and honor to serve the Lord as His disciples. We are not doing the Lord a favor. He is doing us a favor!

I am grateful to God to be able to offer my priestly stewardship to God and to each of you. It is a joy to serve here. But I find even greater joy considering what I know God will do in each of us as we grow in generosity to the grace He bestows on us at St. Thomas.

In the weeks to come, you will hear more about all the efforts going on here and how we can be **Faithful to our Mission**. I know St. Thomas struggled with faith... an "I won't believe until I see it" kind of man.

Well, let's not wait to be chided by the Lord, but rather experience the blessedness of surrendering to His choice! Incredible things will come!

God's peace be with you,

Fr. Bill Ashbaugh
Pastor