



June 5, 2020

Dear St. Nicholas Family,

As I write this “state of the parish” letter, many places in the world and our country are slowly reopening. This welcome news, however, is horribly tainted with new eruptions of ugly racism and violence in our cities. Managing the virus and confronting racism calls forth an even greater reliance upon the strength and depth of the bonds that connect us to the human family. Our response to both will hopefully reflect God's life in us. For Christians, we find trust in Jesus Christ, our Holy Breath, once again.

## OUR PARISH FINANCES

**Weekly/Monthly and Easter Collections** Despite the economic uncertainties and the prohibition against being together, our April and May collections were within 13% of budget. Easter donations, while 30% under budget, showed a great effort on the part of so many to continue supporting our parish home. I am deeply grateful for your faithfulness and commitment.

**Lower Expenses** Some expenses have been lower than budgeted. St. Nick’s applied for and received federal funds that covered the salaries of our hard working, creative, and caring employees for two months. Utility costs have been lower since the campus closed on March 14, and our tireless gardening volunteers have done more landscaping than ever.

**Year-End Results** Thank you for all you are already doing, and thank you for anything extra that you can contribute in the next couple of weeks. I am hopeful that we can end the fiscal year on June 30 with results that are close to our financial goals. I would be enormously grateful for your help in closing this gap.

**Ongoing Projects** Some projects are moving forward as planned because of your generosity in previous years. One is the uplighting in the church, a project that is being completed using funds from the capital campaign. I am also happy to report that the “Royal Flush” Oldershaw Hall bathroom project is nearing completion. This work is being paid for by proceeds from the 2019 Winter Parish Party and is not part of our current budget.

## OUR CONNECTED PARISH

**Virtual and Spiritual Connections** A huge thank you to everyone for sharing your resources, for your many acts of kindness large and small, and for your efforts to remain in contact virtually and spiritually. The readings, reflections, homilies, and music each Sunday, friendly phone calls to seniors, prayer groups, the continuing work of so many committees and ministries: I am humbled and overwhelmingly grateful for the ways you are living the light of Christ in these potentially dark days.

**COVID-19 Fund** The more than \$10,000 contributed to this fund has allowed St. Vincent de Paul to provide food, gift cards, and financial help to more than 40 families and individuals in need, and we are prepared to do more as these months of economic uncertainty unfold. Thank you for the outpouring of donations that has made caring for those in need possible.

**Feeding the Hungry** Start-up money from the COVID-19 Fund and then contributions through a GoFundMe campaign have supported the efforts of parishioners Erika Castro and Pablo Sanchez who offered free lunches daily to 80-100 struggling families through their Evanston restaurant Gyros Planet & Taqueria. Although soup kitchen meals are not being served to large groups, St. Nick's continues to feed the hungry in our community by providing pre-prepared lunches for guests to take away. A heartfelt thank you to those involved directly and to all of you who support them.

## **WHAT COMES NEXT?**

In coordination with all of the parishes, St. Nick's has formed a Reopening Leadership Team (RLT) to write the procedures for our three-phase reopening plan. Twelve parishioners have received training from the Archdiocese and are now working in subcommittees on a detailed plan. We'll share more as the plan is completed and certified by the Archdiocese. (See [www.nickchurch.org](http://www.nickchurch.org) and [www.archchicago.org](http://www.archchicago.org) for more detail.)

In order to be confident that ours will be a safe environment when we gather again to pray in person, we are moving *gradually* with abundant caution. The task is enormous: having adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), assuring social distancing, disinfecting all surfaces and implements used for liturgy, setting up a reservation system, singing safely, and recruiting and organizing "non-vulnerable" volunteers to help with the effort over the next three to six months are just a few of the challenges. I know that you will be as generous as you can be with your time as together we take the steps toward being physically present again.

## **WITH PRAYER AND GRATITUDE**

My daily prayers are with you, like the Apostles from behind closed doors but wide open to the Holy Spirit keeping you healthy in mind, body, soul, and spirit. We are a brave bunch. And we are a generous bunch. If you know of anyone who is in need in any way, remember that we have resources available here at the parish. Let us know so we can help.

With distant hugs of gratitude, please know of my prayers. And let us keep in mind those who suffer from this illness, their dedicated caregivers, those who have died, families who are worried or grieving, all essential workers, and especially those who are the victims of persistent, systemic racism.

Come, Holy Spirit,



Fr. Joseph Tito