

In order for any parish to grow and flourish we need both practical contributions as well as financial assistance. We all contribute to this, but over these few weeks we are being asked to reflect on how we can reassess the commitments we already make.

If it wasn't for us, and the contributions that we make each week, whether with our time, our talents or our treasure, St. Mary's and the Holy Family simply wouldn't be here.

Our parish is a blessing from God, so we are all responsible for maintaining and handing it on to future generations in the best possible condition. With this in mind, I want to quickly go through Parish finances with you and highlight a few points we all need to be aware of as members of this community.

1. Did you know that our Parish does not receive funding from the Diocese, the State or the Vatican? In fact, we are responsible for helping to fund the Diocese, therefore we pay a levy to them each year...this pays for our Diocesan offices, Education, training new priests, assisting retired clergy and so on. Our main source of income is the offertory collection.

2. Just like your own households, our Parish has to balance monthly income and expenditure. As you can see from the leaflet you have received, we have to pay for gas, electricity, council tax, insurance, property costs and repairs, admin, liturgical cost, and the overall cost of Parish ministry.

3. We also need to save for the future in order to remain truly self-sufficient. In 2017 we replaced the hall windows, at a cost of £13,000; in 2019 we replaced the Church windows, at a cost of £63,000; last year the church audio was replaced at a cost of £7,000. So we must be prepared just in case as there will always be things that need repairing, replacing or renewing.

Why are we slightly worried at this time?

1. Our collection has gone down.... The initial drop was just after Fr. John was taken ill, then we had the Pandemic. On average, between 2011 and 2017 our income was £97,000. We are now down to an average over the last three years of £79,000; this is 20% less.

2. At the same time, our operating costs have gone up, as all bills have. So we are left with a shortfall.

3. In our parish we have about 500 families. The current average donation per family per week is £2.63 based on last years figures. Which, does seem low when we consider that a cup of coffee from a high street chain is about £3.

4. Only 43% of our donations are Gift Aided but this is a huge gap compared to the number of people that donate each week. If everyone last year had signed up for Gift Aid, our income could have been an extra £10,000

In the same way that it is impossible to ignore that we need more people to volunteer their Time and Talents, it is equally impossible to ignore the same situation when it comes to our finances. It would be easy to ignore this situation and slowly decline into an unhealthy financial position, but I am sure you will agree, that none of us would want that to happen, especially for our future generations.

The late Cardinal Basil Hume suggested we consider giving our first hour's pay each week. Of course, only you know your own circumstance, and we are fully aware that your finances may be stretched because of the Pandemic. All we do ask, is that you reflect through prayer, about your situation and if you can help with a little extra.

Remember that there is more than one way to give your offertory collection. The best method for giving is by standing order through your bank. This helps you to budget and record your giving as well as keeping it up to date even if you cannot attend church. It also avoid you having to remember cash and the church having to handle it. At St. Mary's we have the DCP machine for contactless giving also through the website. You can

also use the yellow donation envelopes each week though this is our least preferred method as it does cost us time and money.

Please prayerfully consider how you can further contribute to the parish through sharing of your Time, Talents and Treasure.... Whether that is through music, or flower arranging, or if you could help work with Val, our Treasurer, to help ease the work load.... Remember many hands make light work!

Let us all remember and be thankful for the commitment and generosity of those who came before us. We owe the legacy of this beautiful church and community to them.... Let us keep it going for the future...