

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

175th JUBILEE



1848

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2023

2023
Annual
Report





A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR...

As you've undoubtedly seen from the beautiful banners, this year marks our parish's 175th Jubilee. The history of our parish is a great read and a feature will be available later this year. The most consistent themes of our parish community over the past 175 years have been the people's love and commitment to their Catholic faith, and their determination to build a community that thrived on those values and beliefs. These themes have served as the foundation for our parish. Our early parishioners were immigrants who, like so many today, were grateful for the hope and security this country offered. With a strong conviction in their Catholic faith, these immigrants wanted to express their gratitude to God by erecting a building where they and their families could pray, nourish their beliefs, and create a place that would serve as the heart of their religious community.

For 175 years, our parish has been blessed by the generosity of those who made so little yet gave so much so that the parish could continue to grow. I can remember my parents, every Saturday night, setting aside money for the weekly bills, but first placing their church donation in the Sunday envelope, a new concept back then. I remember they and their friends participating in several parish events including community shows, Saturday Night suppers and a number of other parish-sponsored activities that would take place throughout the week; all so that the church could continue to grow. Of course, the most important thing they could do, and did do, to help the parish community was attending Mass every Sunday.

Times have changed for our church in many significant ways. We've seen an increase in our parish facilities, we've seen many beloved priests come and go from our church, and we've welcomed many new members to our congregation, while also having to say goodbye to those who have died. Yet what remains strong in the face of these changes is our present parishioners' love for their Catholic faith and their determination, commitment and generosity. The pictures and articles in this report offer a glimpse of our faith in and love for Jesus Christ, our community, and our ministries, as well as the enthusiasm and support of so many.

This year's Annual Report also demonstrates the vitality, generosity and hope for our parish. Our number of ministries has grown and parish programs continually change in order to meet and address the demands of our very mobile and secular world. Just like the immigrants that built this parish and church, we also need a place and a community to call "home"- a place where we can all come together to celebrate our Catholic faith, hear the Truth be preached and taught, a place where all are welcome, where we come to pray and be strengthened in our faith and where we thank God for our blessings.

Although much has changed in the world and the Church since 1848, what remains consistent in our parish is the Lord's love for us and the dedicated, faith-filled parishioners and staff who give so much of their time, talent and treasure to continue to build up our community.

I never imagined, having grown up in this parish, that I would return as its pastor. I've tried to live up to the legacy of those pastors who led and served before me alongside countless parishioners to make this parish what it is today. I look with hope to the future of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish as we celebrate our Catholic faith, not only with our parishioners, but with the students at Bridgewater State University, the residents of the Correctional Complex and State Hospital, and the surrounding communities as well. May this parish, this church, be what it was for the earliest parishioners; a place where faith is celebrated, community is strengthened, and the love of Jesus Christ is extended to all. - Rev. Bill Devine, Pastor



Our Jubilee Committee hard at work!



Fr. Devine's 50th Anniversary of Ordination Mass, May 2023



Catholic Heart Work Camp Mission Trip to Philadelphia, June 2023

A NOTE FROM FR. RODRIGO...



Friends,

When I entered the seminary, our spiritual director said to us, “Begin praying for the people you will be serving.” I took those words to heart and, while I had no idea I was going to be assigned to Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish in Bridgewater, I have been praying for this community all along. I lucked out with this assignment! Just kidding; we do not believe in luck. We believe in Divine Providence. Yet, I have to say, “It is good to be here!”

A little bit of background about me - I came to the United States in 2004 at the age of 13 from El Salvador. I am the second of three. My brother Mario is the eldest, and my brother Hector is the youngest. While people say that the middle child is the forgotten one, I dare to differ. My mother Timotea Martinez, a single mother, raised all three of us after our father died when we were very young. She raised us to love and care for each other, for the four of us were all that we had. When I told my family that I was going into seminary, no one understood what that meant. Yet, they all fully supported me.

You all have been incredibly generous and welcoming. I feel right at home with you. Your enthusiasm, your joy, your commitment, your piety, and your love for God are humbling. It is a blessing to be your Parochial Vicar.

There is so much good happening in this parish that I believe the neighboring parishes may feel a bit jealous. From our daily Masses, youth groups, university ministry, and woman’s group to our men’s groups and more...you make all these good things happen! And what a blessing for me to be part of it all. My prayer is that I may be all for all as we walk together, as we worship God together, as we build the kingdom of God together. May God bless you all! - Fr. Rodrigo Martinez, Parochial Vicar



Baccalaureate Mass, June 2023



End-of-year Men’s Group Cookout, June 2023



A VIEW FROM THE CHOIR LOFT

Our music ministry is flourishing! The adult choir continues to grow and now makes the rounds from week to week singing at either the 4 PM Vigil Mass, the Sunday Noon Mass or the 10:30 AM Mass at St. Basil's Chapel. A highlight for the music ministry this year was establishing a Children's Choir. Over the course of the year, we had over a dozen young people (and a few parents too) praising God through song at the 9 AM Mass each Sunday from the choir loft. We wish to see both of these groups continue to grow so if you or someone you know might be interested in joining one of our choirs, please contact me! The adults rehearse Monday evening at 6 PM and the children meet Tuesdays at the same time. - *Paul Hoffman, Music Director*



The Children's Choir on Easter Sunday, April 2023

FAITH FORMATION UPDATE...



The past year in Faith Formation was a brave new world! We offered a hybrid program for Grades 1-8 and used the ***Finding God*** curriculum with online features. At-home learning was supplemented with monthly in-person lessons at the Parish Center. Our volunteer mentors provided not only instruction in the faith, but also fun activities that complemented learning. Our Grade 9 & 10 Confirmation students were guided to the sacrament using the ***Chosen*** curriculum. They met as a large group in the gym on alternating Sunday evenings where they watched engaging videos, followed by a discussion to discover more about their role in God's plan for their lives. We continue to build the program by adding more in-person lessons and supporting families with their at-home learning.

- *Debbie Hill, Director, Faith Formation*



Confirmation - May 2023

A CALL TO ACTION...

Five years ago, Fr. Devine asked me to be the “face of the parish” as the Administrative Assistant in the front office. It was a calling that was the answer to what I had been searching for; a call that would allow me to truly serve others.

Managing the parish office is so much more than an administrative job. It is an opportunity for me to spread God’s love through my work. Whether it is helping excited new parents set up a baptism for their child, guiding a mournful family through questions about their loved one’s funeral, working with our amazing volunteers to ensure they have what they need, or collaborating with our dedicated priests and staff members to guarantee everything required for Masses, events, etc. is in order so that you, our parishioners, have a positive experience as we strive to bring God’s Word and love to you through all that we do.

I am blessed to work at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, and even more blessed to be a parishioner here, as my family has been since 1998. Our parish community is second to none, and I am eternally grateful to all of you for that.

- Tina Larson, Administrative Assistant



A PERSONAL REFLECTION...

It’s astonishing that St. Thomas Aquinas Parish has been serving the people of Bridgewater for 175 years! That’s no easy feat given the many challenges that the parish has faced over the years, including attempted arson by non-Catholics during the initial construction process. However, as King David wrote in the book of Psalms, “Many are the plans of the human heart, but it is the decision of the LORD that endures,” and clearly it was our Lord’s decision that St. Thomas Aquinas Parish would endure.

This past year, St. Thomas Aquinas Parish resurrected ministries and programs that had traditionally been a part of our parish. We began a service ministry that allowed volunteers to serve meals on a monthly basis at Fr. Bill’s and Mainspring House in Brockton and to deliver food to families in need with My Brother’s Keeper in Easton. We also launched a Men’s Group, which in the past was called The Holy Name Society. Our Men’s group was highly successful as 30 men attended a session throughout the year! Therefore, let us celebrate all the good the Lord has done through our parish. Let us give thanks to those who gave their blood, sweat, and tears to build this Catholic community which has endured 175 years. Also, let us be as generous with our time, talents and treasure as our forebearers were so that we can ensure that St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Bridgewater endures generations to come! May God reward you for your generosity! - Aaron Durocher, Pastoral Assistant



Giving Tree Gift Sort Night, December 2022



Our volunteers at Fr. Bill’s / Mainspring House, June 2023

FROM THE FINANCE COUNCIL...

Our 2023 fiscal year continues to demonstrate the commitment of our parishioners, the dedication of our staff, and the growth of our ministries and volunteers who, collectively, make the celebration of our 175th Jubilee such an exceptional testament to the unwavering community support of our Catholic faith. Financially, our parish continues to do well due to the overwhelming generosity of our parishioners who have supported our initiatives to further grow our ministries and maintain our physical properties. We ended the year in a solid financial position with planned investments in our facilities that were appropriately budgeted and gratefully supported by our parish community.

From a financial perspective, we invested our FY 22 net year to date surplus to ensure we maintained our properties for a net impact of essentially zero on our financial condition. Due to the generosity of our parish community, our operating revenues were able to cover most of our expenditures in FY 23. We had expenses in excess of our planned budget, which were primarily due to unanticipated utility and insurance costs, that were experienced by all. In addition, total expenses increased over the prior year as a result of improved staffing of positions, such as our music ministry which has replenished a much needed facet in our liturgical celebrations. From a capital improvement perspective, we continue to invest in our properties as demonstrated by the renovations in the lower church and our sanctuary furniture.

As your Parish Finance Council, we take our stewardship role seriously and we are grateful for all the support we receive, not only monetarily, but in talent and volunteer activities that are so meaningful to how our parish continues to thrive as we celebrate the milestone of our 175th Jubilee.

Parish Finance Council Members:

Maryteresa Crealese (Chair), Michael Berolini, James Gale,
Marc Papasodoro, Scott Smith, Bill Suneson & Sheila Whitaker

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS PARISH	FY22 (LY)	FY23 (TY)	FY23 (TY)	FY23 (TY)	FY23 (TY)	VARIANCE OVER \$10,000	FY24
	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	BUDGET (\$)	VS BUD. \$	VS BUD. %	COMMENTS	BUDGET (\$)
INCOME							
OFFERTORY (WEEKLY)	\$ 439,675	\$ 444,712	\$ 400,000	\$ 44,712	11.18%	Continuing trend post Covid	\$ 450,000
GRAND ANNUAL	\$ 186,102	\$ 160,448	\$ 125,000	\$ 35,448	28.36%	Lower FY23 Budget projection	\$ 160,000
SACRAMENTAL/FLOWERS	\$ 43,682	\$ 48,694	\$ 33,500	\$ 15,194	45.36%	Increases in weddings, funerals, flowers	\$ 44,350
GIFTS/BEQUESTS/DONATIONS	\$ 27,741	\$ 48,982	\$ 15,000	\$ 33,982	226.55%	Increase in one-time donations FY23 (Lower Church Sanctuary)	\$ 40,000
CATHOLIC APPEAL REBATE	\$ 7,883	\$ 7,828	\$ -	\$ 7,828	N/A	No Rebate assumed in FY23 Budget	\$ 5,000
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	\$ 43,985	\$ 55,831	\$ 45,000	\$ 10,831	24.07%	Increase in tuition from on-line registration	\$ 87,750
RENTAL/LEASE	\$ 42,764	\$ 45,744	\$ 32,360	\$ 13,384	41.36%	Return of Home School Co-Op lease income FY23	\$ 45,500
INT/DIV/MKT GAIN(LOSS)	\$ (23,086)	\$ 18,600	\$ 10,000	\$ 8,600	86.00%		\$ 150
MINISTRY FUNDRAISING/OTHER	\$ 44,708	\$ 86,107	\$ 10,650	\$ 75,457	708.52%	Includes Mission Trip, Bazaar, Golf Tournament	\$ 48,200
PPP FORGIVENESS LOAN	\$ 97,500	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	N/A		\$ -
INCOME TOTAL	\$ 910,954	\$ 916,946	\$ 671,510	\$ 245,436	36.55%		\$ 880,950
EXPENSES							
SALARIES/BENEFITS	\$ 325,379	\$ 491,566	\$ 491,021	\$ 545	0.11%		\$ 519,891
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXP.	\$ 141,883	\$ 118,640	\$ 122,520	\$ (3,880)	-3.17%	Includes Religious Ed. Payroll and all related Expenses	\$ 103,520
PASTORAL/LITURGICAL	\$ 37,172	\$ 57,345	\$ 51,900	\$ 5,445	10.49%		\$ 65,700
OFFICE/ADMIN/HOUSEHOLD	\$ 48,947	\$ 38,509	\$ 50,250	\$ (11,741)	-23.37%	Better control of office supplies FY23	\$ 49,900
UTILITIES/HEAT/ELEC/W&S	\$ 61,832	\$ 74,303	\$ 51,500	\$ 22,803	44.28%	Increased utility costs FY23	\$ 74,300
PROPERTY/LIABILITY INSURANCE	\$ 46,372	\$ 49,657	\$ 37,000	\$ 12,657	34.21%	Increased insurance costs FY23	\$ 50,700
MAINTENANCE	\$ 43,843	\$ 37,647	\$ 34,350	\$ 3,297	9.60%		\$ 44,700
MINISTRY CENTRAL TITHE	\$ 62,220	\$ 64,117	\$ 62,000	\$ 2,117	3.41%		\$ 65,988
OTHER	\$ 17,655	\$ 38,585	\$ 21,570	\$ 17,015	78.88%	Includes Mission Trip and Fundraising expenses	\$ 29,450
EXPENSES TOTAL	\$ 785,303	\$ 970,369	\$ 922,111	\$ 48,258	5.23%		\$ 1,004,149
NET OPERATING INCOME(LOSS)	\$ 125,651	\$ (53,423)	\$ (250,601)	\$ 197,178	-78.68%		\$ (123,199)
NON-OPERATING INC./EXP.							
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT INCOME	\$ 33,337	\$ 47,507	\$ 20,000	\$ 27,507	137.54%	Increase in Maintenance Fund giving FY23	\$ 42,000
CAP ACQ/IMPROVEMENT EXP.	\$ 51,320	\$ 103,109	\$ -	\$ 103,109	N/A	Lower Church renovations, Sanctuary furniture	\$ 150,000
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT NET	\$ (17,983)	\$ (55,602)	\$ 20,000	\$ (75,602)	-378.01%		\$ (108,000)
NET INCOME(LOSS)	\$ 107,668	\$ (109,025)	\$ (230,601)	\$ 121,576	-52.72%		\$ (231,199)

STA Operating Balance as of 6/30/2023: \$169,535

STB Operating Balance as of 6/30/2023: \$74,328

A LOOK BACK FROM FINANCE & OPERATIONS...



175 years strong and showing no signs of slowing...

Our parish is many things and this past year made that more evident than ever. It continues to grow and thrive, serving our families and the greater community. More and more, the parish is becoming a gathering place for our faith, as well as the center of all of our outreach ministries, events and happenings. With this activity comes the challenge of keeping all parish properties safe and working properly so that we can serve our parish families. This past year has brought many changes, and with them, the critical need to focus on deliberate and effective stewardship of the generosity we have received. My role as Finance and Operations Manager is to work with Fr. Bill under the financial oversight of the Parish Finance Council to make the best fiscal decisions for the parish. Every aspect of our parish has been analyzed for any needs and then prioritized, and, with the guidance and advice of both the Finance and Maintenance Councils, budgets are created to make these necessary changes a reality without hurting day-to-day operations. From building to building, we have made needed improvements and changes, and as you can see, there are a lot of moving parts to keep the parish operating as it should. Donations and sponsorships have been vital in helping to stem some of the costs of these changes, but the remaining costs are being absorbed by the parish, and we constantly monitor our expenses to minimize the impact on those established budgets. As we move into the next 175 years of our parish, we will continue to assess and monitor every need and make those changes that will benefit us all for years to come.

- Peter Vitagliano, Finance & Operations Manager

CEMETERY UPDATE...

This past year has been one of growth and expansion in our cemeteries. We constantly assess both cemeteries, and as they have been approaching full capacity, plans were enacted to expand them. The new columbarium unit was installed in the center of the new cemetery, opening 72 new ash plot niches, and the double depth section of the cemetery was expanded for two more complete rows, opening 88 new cemetery plots. These changes will ensure there are plots available for years to come, and still leave room for future expansion. The paving of section "M" and road repairs were also completed, as well as foundation repairs in our double depth section caused by flooding. As you can see, the cemeteries have undergone many changes this past year. These changes are meant to ensure their continuity and availability to our parishioners and the greater community. As we move forward, the needs of the cemeteries will be monitored and we will continue to work to keep our cemeteries operating and beautiful for everyone. Contact the parish office at (508) 697-9528 if you have any cemetery needs or questions.

- Peter Vitagliano, Finance & Operations Manager



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CEMETERY	FY22 (LY) ACTUAL	FY23 (TY) ACTUAL	FY23 (TY) BUDGET (\$)	FY23 (TY) VS BUD. \$	FY23 (TY) VS BUD. %	VARIANCE OVER \$10,000 COMMENTS	FY24 BUDGET (\$)
INCOME							
INCOME TOTAL	\$ 73,244	\$ 143,700	\$ 110,000	\$ 33,700	30.64%	Increase in burials/burial costs	122,500
EXPENSES							
EXPENSES TOTAL	\$ 86,609	\$ 103,450	\$ 101,892	\$ 1,558	1.53%		109,629
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$ (13,365)	\$ 40,250	\$ 8,108	\$ 32,142	396.42%		\$ 12,871
NON-OPERATING INCOME & EXPENSES							
GAIN (LOSS) ON INVESTMENTS	\$ (38,276)	\$ 29,365	\$ -	\$ 29,365	N/A	No gain/loss assumed in FY23 Budget	\$ -
RECEIPTS FOR PERPETUAL CARE	\$ 3,550	\$ 4,925	\$ 5,000	\$ (75)	-1.50%		\$ -
CAP ACQ/IMPROVEMENT EXPENSE	\$ 29,453	\$ 181,260	\$ 60,000	\$ 121,260	202.10%	Columbarium and Double Depth Expansions	\$ -
NET INCOME (LOSS)	\$ (77,544)	\$ (106,720)	\$ (46,892)	\$ (59,828)	127.59%		\$ 12,871

Operating Balance as of 6/30/2023: \$203,634



The Year in Review



Block Party, September 2022



Trunk or Treat, October 2022



Senior Thanksgiving Dinner, November 2022



Christmas Pageant, December 2022



Christmas Bazaar, November 2022



Volunteer Appreciation Social, March 2023



St. Valentine's Dance, February 2023



Golf Tournament, June 2023