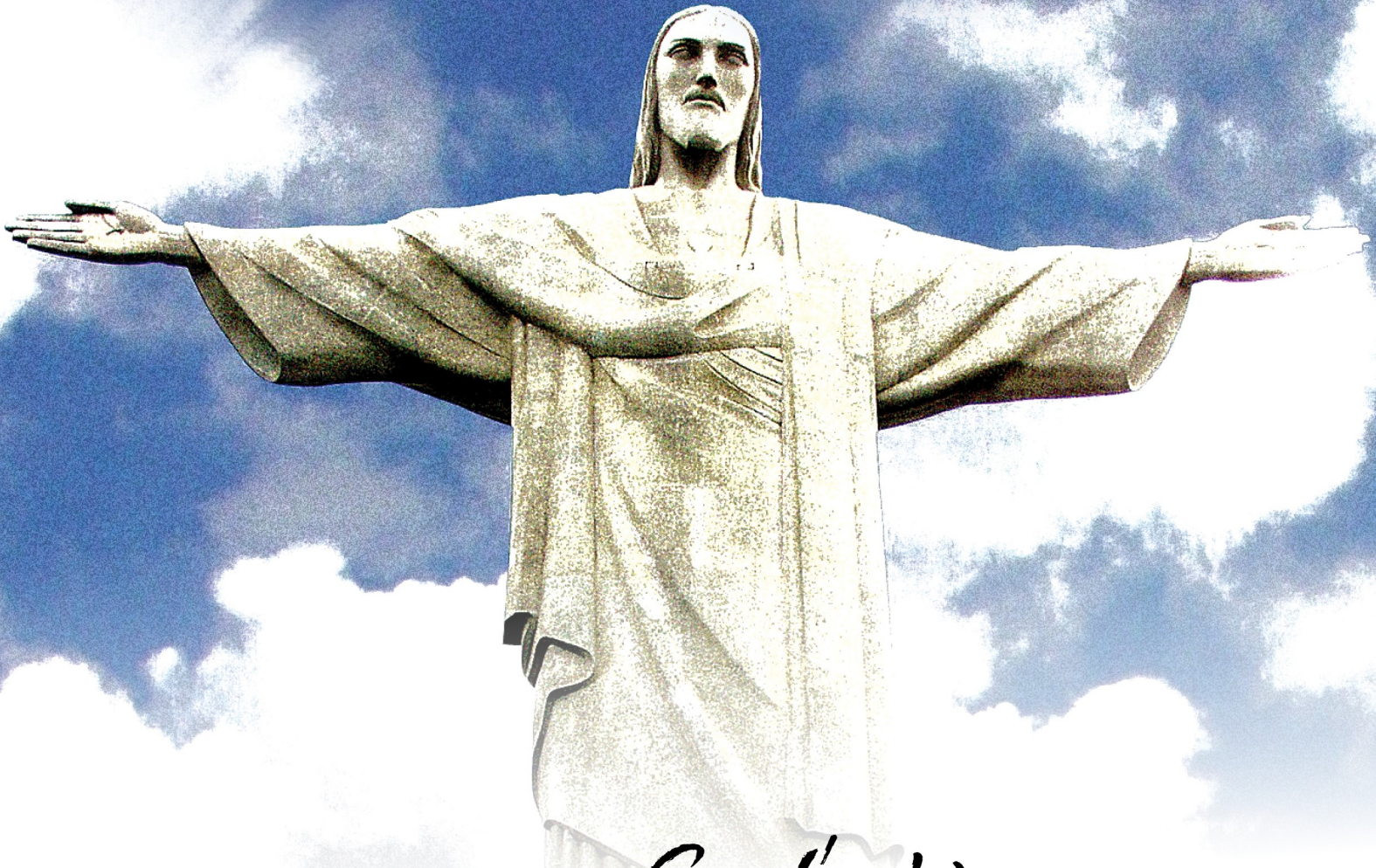


SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS PARISH

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Building up God's Kingdom!

**From Discipleship
To Evangelization**

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Jesus came to establish God's Kingdom on earth where ALL people would believe in Him and God's love for us. In and through His words and actions, Jesus planted the "seeds" of His Kingdom and asked His disciples to pray that "Thy Kingdom come." Since then, God's Kingdom has been growing, albeit slowly, and often with challenges. As His ministry on earth came to a close, Jesus gave His disciples a mandate, a mission to continue to build up His Kingdom.

We build up His Kingdom in two ways. First, we have to learn to become **Disciples**. A disciple is one who learns from a teacher. It means we have to deepen our belief in Jesus and learn from Him which we, in our parish, are doing in a number of ways. Our Faith Formation Program focuses not only in educating children but their parents as well. Additionally, we offer Bible studies, a Men's group, a Lenten parish retreat, Vacation Bible Camp and individual spiritual direction. Probably the best way to learn what it means to be a disciple is by participating at Mass, where we listen to God speaking to us through the scriptures and are nourished by the Eucharist. As we continue to grow in our knowledge of Jesus and his teachings, we develop a more personal and intimate relationship with Him and want to share it with others.

Once we know what it means to be a disciple, we are now called to **Evangelize**, to share our faith with others with the hope that they too will become a disciple.



While faith may be personal, it should never be private. Personal witness and interaction are the best way to share our faith with others. In our parish, we evangelize in many ways. Faith first begins with parents sharing their faith with each other and their children at home and at church. We've worked hard to make Mass, our parish, and other activities welcoming, faithful, and engaging.

We also evangelize by sharing our faith with other groups. Our dedicated service ministries extend to the Correctional Complex, the State Hospital, My Brother's Keeper, Fr. Bill's Place, St. Vincent de Paul Society, our annual Youth Mission Trip, and through our vibrant Campus Ministry to the BSU students.

The work of spreading the Gospel is both a privilege and a responsibility. It requires not only our prayers and efforts, but also our ongoing support. Your continued involvement and financial contributions are essential to sustaining and expanding our mission. They enable us to support our ministries, engage in outreach activities, and invest in the spiritual growth of our parish and the broader community.

In this pivotal time, let us reaffirm our commitment to growing as disciples and to advancing the cause of Christ. Your involvement and support are the pillars that uphold our collective mission and enable us to make a lasting impact. Thank you for your dedication and generosity. Together, let us continue to move forward with faith, purpose, and a heart full of hope for the future. - Fr. Devine



Easter Mass, 2024



Water Balloon fun at Vacation Bible Camp



Altar Server trip to Canobie Lake Park



Mission Trip students and chaperones departing for a week-long Mission Trip in Knoxville, TN



A NOTE FROM FR. RODRIGO

In his Gospel account, Saint Luke the Evangelist tells us that our Lord's mission was always to "proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God." According to Luke, for Jesus, this was a "must" (Lk 4:43) – "I must proclaim" (Lk 4:43), He told His disciples. Our Lord's use of the imperative "must" suggests that the Kingdom of God needs to be proclaimed with urgency; it needs to reach the ends of the earth – that is everyone.

The Church, throughout the centuries, has taken the words of Jesus to heart, in how she lives, prays, and works. For we must go out, proclaim, and make known what Jesus Himself has accomplished - our salvation.

Yet, how do we do that? By living out in the joy which that message has brought **us**. Saint Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* stated that: "the gospel must be proclaimed by **witness**." He emphasized that faithful witnesses "radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current cultural values... [it is] through this wordless witness, that Christians [are able] to stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live." Questions like: *Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst?*" (EN.21).

In other words, when we live on this earth as we desire to live in the Kingdom of Heaven, others who may not yet know Christ will be moved to seek **the source of our hope**. Therefore, how we live this hope is the first step in evangelization.

Our parish is a shining example of what it means to be an evangelizer. With numerous ministries, from the solemn duty of proclaiming the Word of God at Mass to the challenging and sometimes daunting task of navigating security points at the State Prison, we bring the good news of the Kingdom to all.

Also, as you see in the many pictures in our report, we, as a community, have accomplished so much, and *while the Kingdom is already here, it is not yet fully realized*. Our mission continues. Our mission to "go out and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28:19) continues. Thank you for being on and supporting this mission. May God continue to bless you in your faith. - Fr. Rodrigo



BSU Campus Ministry Tubing Trip



BSU Campus Ministry Weekend Retreat



DISCIPLESHIP AND EVANGELIZATION THROUGH MUSIC

First, we start with a prayer. At choir rehearsals, I mean. I don't think I'm particularly good at leading prayer. If I don't have a prayer at the ready, my mind sometimes just goes blank or I end up in a loop I can't seem to escape. Despite the risk, I know it's important that we ask the Lord to bless us and aid us in our singular purpose - to prepare our music so that we may give glory and praise to Him and lead others to do the same at Holy Mass. But the theme of this annual report isn't prayer, it's discipleship and evangelization! So why do I bring this up?

When I first moved to Boston in 1987 to pursue a Master's Degree in Piano Performance, I somewhat reluctantly got involved in the music ministry at a nearby church - my first ever experience doing so! By the grace of God, I had excellent role models in the music directors there. And, yes, we always began rehearsals with a prayer! What I didn't yet realize was that I had actually moved to Boston to reaffirm my faith as an adult, and ultimately pursue a career serving the church through music.

The people I met at that time, both ordained and laity, had a profound effect on my faith and helped deepen my understanding and appreciation of the Mass and liturgical music. No one said to me that they were going to evangelize me. If they had, I'm sure I would have bolted!

Discipleship and evangelization can happen through kindness, friendship, simple actions and gestures that are inclusive and welcoming. It is truly like the gentle breeze and not the storm. We are all capable of evangelization by authentically living our faith life for others to see, and yes, even through our shared love for music and music-making.

As your Music Director, my prayer is for all to feel welcome to engage with our ministry, to increase participation, grow choir membership and for our current and faithful music ministers to remain engaged, challenged and open to the Holy Spirit working through them. Huh, I guess that wasn't so hard after all. - Paul Hoffman, Music Director



Children's Choir

BUILDING GOD'S KINGDOM GRADE BY GRADE

The Faith Formation Program has the privilege of building God's Kingdom by evangelizing young hearts and minds to know God, to love God, and to serve God in this life and be with Him forever in the next. With your prayerful, financial, and practical support, we held more in-person classes for Grades 1-8. Our youngest parishioners benefited from being together in a classroom community. One of my favorite activities the fifth graders did was "A Letter to a Friend." In these letters, they told a friend why they believed in Jesus and they encouraged their friend to do the same. Our Confirmation students had the unique opportunity to listen to guest speakers who not only talked about the topic, but who also witnessed the truth and beauty of our Catholic faith. These speakers ranged from parishioners to deacons to a Catholic TV personality. They heard from converts who chose to become Catholic, others who had walked away and then returned to their faith, and still others who stayed the course because they found strength and consolation in their faith.

In our ministry, it is typically adults evangelizing students. There are instances, however, when students evangelize each other. This summer we had a middle school student requesting the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. When asked why, the response was that a friend had done the same thing the year before and had shared his experience.

This is evangelization and how we build God's Kingdom, by simply sharing the message of Jesus Christ with our friends and family.

- Debbie Hill, Faith Formation Director



Confirmation, May 2024



SPREADING CHRIST'S LOVE

Sitting in the front office allows me the privilege of assisting everyone I encounter with whatever needs they have. As a disciple of Jesus, as we all strive to be, I consistently put forth an effort to show kindness and mirror His love to all our parishioners, whether it be a family that is new to Bridgewater looking for a parish to call home, a young couple seeking to baptize their child, a family who lost a loved one, or a new volunteer looking to join one of our many ministries. All of these aforementioned circumstances, and countless others, bind us by a single, common thread; our love for our Lord Jesus Christ and the desire to walk on this earth in accordance with His will. It is our duty to spread His love to others, and, in doing so, bring others closer to Him.

I firmly believe in the saying ***you learn what you live, and you live what you learn***. We all need to live in a way that gives glory to our Lord, so that people may learn from our words and actions, especially if they are lost or wavering. When we feel lost, we need to open our minds and hearts to learn the truth from other disciples; the truth which is our Lord Jesus Christ. I am honored to work for our parish, and I thank all of you for being true disciples of our Lord. Together we will bring others closer to God through our love for Him and His people.

- Tina Larson, Administrative Assistant

GO, THEREFORE, AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS

Over the past few years, our parish has made a conscious effort to not only form strong disciples for Christ, but to empower these disciples to go out and evangelize, to spread the good news. Three years ago, we formed a new Evangelization Committee, which organized parishioner witness talks about how much Jesus had changed their lives. Two years ago, a parishioner volunteered to coordinate additional Eucharistic Adoration times. She extended an open invitation to spend time with Jesus, who is truly present in the Eucharist. Also, a generous parishioner donated faith-enriching books which our ushers distributed to all those who attended Christmas Mass. This year, we coordinated our first Eucharistic Procession in over 50 years through Bridgewater, where we literally brought Jesus to the people of the town. Throughout this time period, a variety of guest speakers visited the parish and gave amazing talks to help us deepen and grow in our understanding of the faith. All of these efforts, along with your prayers, led to our largest group of people entering the Church, ***when we had 12 catechumens this past Easter!*** A typical number is 3, maybe 4.

While these are all fantastic initiatives, there is more to be done. There are many who are confused about what the Catholic faith is, and what it isn't. There are others who haven't heard much about the faith at all. **ALL baptized Catholics** are called to spread the good news about Jesus. We commend you in your efforts, but also encourage you to double down and bring more people to Christ and His Church! May God bless you and your family! - Aaron Durocher, Pastoral Assistant



Newly Baptized and Confirmed - Easter Vigil 2024



First Eucharistic Procession in over 50 years! June, 2024



Rev. Tom Macdonald at our Lenten Mission

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS PARISH	FY23 (LY)	FY24 (TY)	FY24 (LY)	FY24 (TY)	FY24 (TY)	VARIANCE OVER \$10,000	FY25
	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	BUDGET (\$)	VS. BUD. (\$)	VS. BUD. %	COMMENTS	BUDGET (\$)
INCOME							
OFFERTORY (WEEKLY)	\$444,712	\$493,929	\$450,000	\$43,929	9.76%	Increase in attendance and giving	\$485,000
GRAND ANNUAL	\$160,448	\$174,331	\$160,000	\$14,331	8.96%	Full parish mailer LY	\$165,000
SACRAMENTAL/FLOWERS	\$48,694	\$47,091	\$44,350	\$2,741	6.18%		\$46,750
GIFTS/BEQUESTS/DONATIONS	\$48,982	\$30,904	\$40,000	(\$9,096)	-22.74%		\$32,000
CATHOLIC APPEAL REBATE	\$7,828	\$7,215	\$5,000	\$2,215	44.30%		\$5,000
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	\$55,831	\$44,828	\$87,750	(\$42,922)	-48.91%	Lower enrollment than Budget	\$50,000
RENTAL/LEASE	\$45,744	\$48,240	\$45,500	\$2,740	6.02%		\$46,500
INT/DIV/MKT GAIN(LOSS)	\$18,600	\$29,389	\$150	\$29,239	N/A	Strong Investment market performance	\$150
MINISTRY FUNDRAISING/OTHER	\$86,107	\$145,752	\$48,200	\$97,552	202.39%	New Pews/Golf Tourney/Bazaar/Mission Trip	\$76,600
INCOME TOTAL	\$916,946	\$1,021,679	\$880,950	\$140,729	15.97%		\$907,000
EXPENSES							
SALARIES/BENEFITS	\$491,566	\$530,695	\$519,891	\$10,804	2.08%	Annual increases/Full staff	\$538,060
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXP.	\$118,640	\$90,425	\$103,520	(\$13,095)	-12.65%	Savings on Payroll FF payroll and supplies	\$99,685
PASTORAL/LITURGICAL	\$57,345	\$59,684	\$65,700	(\$6,016)	-9.16%		\$62,000
OFFICE/ADMIN/HOUSEHOLD	\$38,509	\$42,954	\$49,900	(\$6,946)	-13.92%		\$53,750
UTILITIES/HEAT/ELEC/W&S	\$74,303	\$75,038	\$74,300	\$738	0.99%		\$72,300
PROPERTY/LIABILITY INSURANCE	\$49,657	\$54,619	\$50,700	\$3,919	7.73%		\$55,200
MAINTENANCE	\$37,647	\$43,153	\$44,700	(\$1,547)	-3.46%		\$37,900
MINISTRY CENTRAL TITHE	\$64,117	\$64,165	\$65,988	(\$1,823)	-2.76%		\$68,000
OTHER	\$38,585	\$48,150	\$29,450	\$18,700	63.50%	Mission Trip expenses	\$42,300
EXPENSES TOTAL	\$970,369	\$1,008,883	\$1,004,149	\$4,734	0.47%		\$1,029,195
NET OPERATING INCOME (LOSS)	(\$53,423)	\$12,796	(\$123,199)	\$135,995	N/A		(\$122,195)
NON-OPERATING INCOME & EXPENSES							
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT INCOME	\$47,507	\$48,759	\$42,000	\$6,759	16.09%		\$50,000
CAP ACQ/IMPROVEMENT EXP.	\$103,109	\$84,789	\$150,000	(\$65,211)	-43.47%	Budget set high and not fully actioned	\$170,000
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT NET	(\$55,602)	(\$36,030)	(\$108,000)	\$71,970	-66.64%		(\$120,000)
NET INCOME (LOSS)	(\$109,025)	(\$23,234)	(\$231,199)	\$207,965	-89.95%		(\$242,195)
Parish Operating Balance as of 6/30/2024: \$91,826							
Chapel Operating Balance as of 6/30/2024: \$111,969							
ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CEMETERY	FY23 (LY)	FY24 (TY)	FY24	FY24 (TY)	FY24 (TY)	VARIANCE OVER \$10,000	FY25
	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	BUDGET	VS. BUD. (\$)	VS. BUD. %	COMMENTS	BUDGET (\$)
INCOME							
INCOME TOTAL	\$148,625	\$181,900	\$117,500	\$64,400	54.81%	Increase in burials and Lot Sales	\$153,500
EXPENSES							
EXPENSES TOTAL	\$103,450	\$113,668	\$109,629	\$4,039	3.68%		\$107,771
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$45,175	\$68,232	\$7,871	\$60,361	766.88%		\$45,729
NON-OPERATING INCOME & EXPENSES							
GAIN (LOSS) ON INVESTMENTS	\$29,365	\$28,252	\$0	\$28,252	N/A	No gain/loss assumed in FY24 Budget	\$0
RECEIPTS FOR PERPETUAL CARE	\$4,925	\$10,875	\$5,000	\$5,875	117.50%		\$10,000
CAP ACQ/IMPROVEMENT EXPENSES	\$181,260	\$25,993	\$0	\$25,993	N/A	Double Depth Repairs/New mowers FY24	\$0
NET INCOME (LOSS)	(\$106,720)	\$77,491	\$12,871	\$64,620	502.06%		\$55,729
Operating Balance as of 6/30/2024: \$245,708							

FROM THE FINANCE COUNCIL

Parish Finance Council Members:

Maryteresa Crealese (Chair), Michael Berolini, James Gale, Brian Hynes, Marc Papasodoro, Scott Smith, and Sheila Whitaker



As Fr. Bill's opening letter in this report demonstrates, our parishioners' support is the pillar that upholds our collective mission. Our 2024 fiscal year continues to demonstrate the commitment of our parishioners, the dedication of our staff, and the growth of our ministries and volunteers. Financially, our parish maintained consistency in managing expected revenues with expenses and finished the year with a net increase to our consolidated fund balance surplus, which includes both parish and cemetery operations, of approximately \$54,300. This was obtainable by the generosity of our parishioners and careful fiscal management as we continued to ensure that our key ministerial efforts thrive and our properties are appropriately maintained. In achieving this, we worked diligently with all parish councils to inventory needed maintenance and repairs and we continue to progress on our 3-year plan for capital improvements. We are grateful for the generous support and participation by our parish community.

As your Parish Finance Council, we remain steadfast in our dedication to ensure we are diligent in our stewardship of the parish financial condition. We are grateful for the financial support and dedication of our parishioners and the staff that assist with all that we have been able to accomplish in our journey of faith, hope, and purpose in fiscal year 2024 and beyond. - Maryteresa Crealese, Chair

On a personal note, Mary Crealese has faithfully led the Parish Finance Council for the past 10 years and is now leaving the PFC as she begins retirement. Mary's experience and knowledge as an Audit Partner at KPMG has been invaluable, and has benefited not only the council members, Peter Vitagliano, and the parish in general, but also me personally. Mary has taught me so much and I'm personally grateful for her friendship. - Fr. Devine



EVANGELIZATION THROUGH STEWARDSHIP

The 175th Jubilee was a testament to the strength and faith of our parish because of your continuous support. That momentum has continued to carry us and shine light on our calling to serve God and His people. That calling is different and unique to each of us, allowing us to utilize our own talents to bring others to Christ. Finance & Operations involves the stewardship of the generosity we have been given to support the parish, its programs, and ministries. It also maintains the parish and its facilities to keep them safe and welcoming.

This past year, we put a major focus on the church itself, and made many repairs and necessary improvements. We completely remodeled the lower church with all new pews, sanctuary furniture, and repainting. The floors were redone with new carpeting and long-lasting laminate flooring. Through the amazing generosity of one of our parishioners, the original upper and lower sacristy vestment cases were removed and replaced with modern and functional units. Brighter LED lighting was installed where possible, and a new wireless microphone system replaced our outdated and often failing equipment.

As we move into the new year, we are continuing to focus on necessary repairs and improvements throughout the parish, and doing our best to solidify the foundation we have built, so that we may continue to serve all of you and bring more people closer to God... together.

- Peter Vitagliano, Finance and Operations Manager



Our Lower Church pew removal volunteers



Our newly renovated Lower Church

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



St. Valentine's Day Dance



Volunteer Appreciation Social



Easter Egg Hunt



Several Grade 3 Faith Formation Students



Delivering food with My Brother's Keeper



Our Christmas Bazaar Volunteers



Members of our Golf Tournament Committee



Senior Citizen Thanksgiving Dinner



Our Rummage Sale Volunteers



One of our 5 First Holy Communion Classes