

Annual Report, St. Bridget Parish

Year Ending, June 30, 2009

The 2008-09 year was financially a very difficult year for St. Bridget, but it was nonetheless a year that we continued to celebrate well as a community and to reach out to others generously.

Our Finance Committee originally projected that Sunday envelope income would remain flat this past year, compared to the previous year – an action which was thought to be conservative at the time. However, the world recession was far deeper than originally anticipated, and especially affected sectors that included many parishioners: i.e., the banking, real estate, and investment sectors. As a result, **regular envelope giving declined by \$80,000**. In addition, the Annual Catholic Appeal refund to St. Bridget declined by \$18,000, as many parishioners were unable to fulfill their spring '08 pledges to the Archdiocese. Bequests (always unpredictable) also declined by \$14,500. Our spring auction, though very successful, still declined about \$10,000 from the FY08 total. **Our net revenue for the year was over \$100,000 less than the previous year.**

As this was happening, the pastoral team responded by cutting spending in several areas, while trying to avoid staff layoffs. Liturgy, Youth, and Religious Education all reduced spending. Even in General Parish, the central operations of the parish, our costs were trimmed compared to FY07, when we last had the presence of a full-time pastor. Facilities did show an increase, due to higher utility rates and increased maintenance costs. Overall, **our net FY09 deficit was thus cut to around \$60,000**, which was covered from parish savings reserves.

Despite cutting expenses, our regular programs were maintained and several new programs and events were added. Youth obviously has remained a very high priority for the parish, with the largest single line item of over \$184,000 for Catholic education. Our Children's Liturgy of the Word at the 10:30 Sunday Mass remained very popular, and our Religious Education Family Nights drew more families than ever. Our summer mission trips to Lummi and Jonestown, as well as service opportunities during the year, continued to attract many of our youth to volunteer their time and effort. Likewise, our weekly Adoration, monthly Welcome Masses, periodic pancake breakfasts and other parish activities continued, and a new parish Pictorial Directory was published. Our Charitable Outreach has remained very strong; in fact, all of our special collections have shown increases over the previous year, some very sizable. Our Lenten charitable collections more than doubled, and the CCS collection increased 5-fold.

Upon his arrival in October as our new pastor, Fr. Sauer invited all our parishioners to a series of home meetings, to share with him our visions for the future of St. Bridget. Many of the new initiatives this past year were in direct response to those meetings. He began holding Youth Masses once a month, offered a scripture study on Revelation, and invited a guest speaker, Fr. Robert Kennedy, to give a special Parish Lenten Retreat. He promoted a special dinner for our parish widows/widowers, a Sweetheart Mass and dinner for couples, and a gala Appreciation Dinner in May for all our parish volunteers. Fr. Tim has also resonated personally with our high parish priority on youth; witness the Christmas and Easter celebrations that involved our children, our family-centered celebration last spring of First Communion, or the regular interaction that takes place when our youth are dismissed at the 10:30 a.m. Sunday Liturgy of the Word.

In sum, it was another year of transition for St. Bridget, our second in a row, made all the more challenging because of our financial difficulties. ***These financial challenges have continued to date in our new fiscal year, and the parish must meet and solve these difficulties in order to continue to build on the excellent foundation laid down this past year.***

A Sacramental Report – Numbers and Policies

Obviously, there are many other numbers that can describe St. Bridget, other than from the financial report. Some of these reveal trends in the sacramental practice within a parish, or trends within the wider Catholic Church.

Last year there were **78 baptisms** in the parish, an increase over recent years. Of these 78, 63 were infants under a year old, 4 were between a year and two years of age, and 9 were between the age of two and 18. There were two adult baptisms, and also 3 Professions of Faith, made by baptized non-Catholic Christians joining the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil, when they were also confirmed as part of the initiation rites. As has been true for the last several years, baptisms of children nearly always occur during one of our weekend Masses, a recognition that **the community is an integral part of the initiation process**. This is standard policy within the Archdiocese; there is an expectation that a family is registered and attending Mass at St. Bridget when the parents bring their child for baptism.

There were **55 children who received their First Eucharist here at St. Bridget this year**. St. Bridget has a preparation program for the sacrament that includes parents, and it is the Archdiocesan policy that all children must first receive instruction in the sacrament of Reconciliation before proceeding to First Communion.

There were no **youth Confirmations** this past year, as this sacrament generally is celebrated in parishes every other year. This year St. Bridget's eligible juniors and seniors will celebrate Confirmation with the Archbishop on Sunday, December 6th, and they have already begun the preparation process. **We have likewise begun an adult Confirmation preparation** for adult Catholics who have not completed their initiation; see our bulletin for details. This is a very important step; in fact Catholics must be confirmed before seeking a Church marriage in some dioceses.

There were **many individual anointings of the sick**. This number is not recorded. Again, older Catholics can remember that this sacrament was seen as "last rites," and it is still occasionally referred to in that manner. However, the sacrament is much more commonly understood and practiced as a sacrament for healing, both physically and spiritually. The individual form of the sacrament is very personal, and powerful. These can be arranged by contacting Fr. Sauer, and are often done prior to surgery or when hospitalization is involved. It is also a powerful sign to celebrate this sacrament communally, as St. Bridget did this October 17-18. We also make it a parish practice to contact our shut-ins before the Christmas and Easter holidays, to anoint those who would like to receive the sacrament.

There were **20 funerals**, again an increase, of which 17 were celebrated with a funeral Masses; 7 of these were celebrated with the body present, and the other 10 with cremated remains present. These numbers represent a trend toward more cremations, both in St. Bridget and the wider American Church. However, it remains the strong preference of the Church to have a burial of the body of the deceased, or at least to celebrate the funeral in the presence of the body. When cremation is seen as an acceptable alternative to the normal manner of Catholic burial, the Church urges that **priority should still be given to the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy with the body of the deceased present**.

There were **22 weddings** in the parish – another increase. Ten were weddings between two Catholics, and 8 were between a Catholic and a Christian party. In 4 cases, one person was a non-Christian. (These numbers include Catholic weddings celebrated at the Villa chapel, for which St. Bridget gives official delegation to a visiting priest or deacon.) **It is Archdiocesan policy – and the policy at St. Bridget -- that couples to be married should be registered and attending Mass regularly in their parish.**

Finally, as of June 30 there were **781 registered parish families**, representing **2602 people**. On average that's only slightly more than 3 people per household. Out of these 781 families, an estimated **550 families use contribution envelopes once a month** or more, which is approximately 70% of our families.

A Final Note, on our Parish Plant: our Roof!

As this report was preparing to go to press, our Facilities Committee was getting bids to repair major areas of our roof. There is leaking in our Blessed Sacrament Chapel, and large areas of the roof over our Hall, kitchen, and offices are very old and in need of replacement soon. We have early bids that indicate that this work will cost between a hundred and two hundred thousand dollars. Our Finance Committee and Pastoral Council are aware of the situation.

While we currently have those funds in our "Major Maintenance" reserves, we will probably exhaust those fund reserves in doing this project. We will keep the parish at large informed of our progress.