

Our Lady of Fatima
858 Louisville Rd
Alcoa, TN 37363

May 19, 2022

Dear Parish Family,

Over the past several years your generosity of spirit and faithful commitment to stewardship have placed Our Lady of Fatima in a great financial position. Adding together our remaining Home Campaign fund, the reserve fund, and the current fiscal year's surplus, we have approximately \$850,000. This great blessing, according to our Catholic tradition, also comes with an equally great responsibility to use it wisely and prudently.

Discerning the wise and prudent use of our resources is not something that can be done alone by the pastor, the staff, or even our Parish Council and Finance Committee. As our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has taught us, right discernment requires a consultation of all the people of the parish. The Holy Spirit speaks to each of us individually. It is only in listening to his voice in every member that we hear his singular vision for our community.

Therefore, we ask that you spend this next week in prayer and reflection and be prepared to express what you believe the Holy Spirit is asking of our parish. Next weekend, you will have the opportunity to tell us your thoughts by writing them down and placing them in the baskets that are passed. From the gathered responses, we will discern what our next step as a community will be. All are welcome and encouraged to participate in this process; you each have a voice and your voice is important.

To aid you in your prayer and reflection, we present the five following reasonable and practical ideas:

- 1) We build a new music room and convert the current music room into two classrooms. This had been our plan as expressed in a letter earlier this year. However, in the time it has taken to receive approval from the city, the cost of this project has increased over \$50,000. This exorbitant increase has given us pause, and is why we are considering other possibilities. Moreover, the feedback we received from the Synodal Process suggests that small groups are more greatly desired than the large group classrooms we had planned.
- 2) We pay off the majority of our debt and, at the current rate, pay it off completely within twelve months. It would be of considerable value to our day-to-day operations to have a \$15,000 per month reduction in expenses. It would allow us to be more proactive in maintenance, technology upgrades,

and other areas. Furthermore, it would permit a greater generosity in giving to community organizations.

- 3) We expand the kitchen. The kitchen is one of our most commonly used shared spaces. It was also designed for a smaller community than we have become. Our growth and the number of events we hold are straining the limited kitchen space we have. The expansion would also be an opportunity to purchase newer and more modern equipment so that the process of food preparation is faster and more consistent.
- 4) We markedly increase our giving to the most needy in our community and the local organizations that serve them. You have seen on the news the great turmoil in our world. The markets are increasingly volatile, inflation is at its highest point in decades, and many jobs continue to be left unfilled. The need in our community for assistance will grow this year and probably for the next few years until calm returns. We are well positioned to be of help to the members of our parish and everyone in Blount County.
- 5) The final suggestion is probably the most controversial but it is also the most forward-looking. Our Holy Father has unambiguously and definitively taught that caring for the natural world is a moral obligation. To be a Christian is to love the created world just as God loves it. We must become better stewards of all of creation. We could use the funds to make our parish carbon-neutral. It would require a mix of technologies and parish changes, but it is within reach. Doing this now before international agreements and government regulations require us to—and let's be honest, that will happen before long—is a prudent decision. It will be cheaper, and we will have greater flexibility in the decisions we make. It would also be a tool of evangelization showing our community a different and better way of living that is more faithful to the Gospel.

You are not constrained to choose one of these options; however, we encourage you to give each of them careful consideration recognizing that each choice will still require further planning and determining details. While none of the suggestions would use the entirety of our funds, each one would consume the majority. Therefore, we must choose a single priority.

Thank you for your careful consideration and we look forward to hearing from you and journeying with you into our community's future.

In Christ,

Fr. Pete & Fr. Adam