

Dear Parish Family,

“Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.” This ancient prayer of the Church expresses the deepest longing of our faith community. The fire of the Holy Spirit burning in our courtyard summons us to Eucharist every Sunday and is a beautiful sign of the work of that same Holy Spirit in our lives. I am inviting you now to make of yourselves new kindling for this flame of faith which must be kept burning brightly in our community.

Our Faith Community is making a significant difference in the lives of our parishioners and in the lives of the poor among us and beyond our boundaries. I was standing next to a parishioner today as our youth ministry team and life-teen band led our middle school children in praise and worship; we were both in tears witnessing the beauty and talent lifted up to give God the glory. I met with a couple of our PSR catechists yesterday, listening as they told me of their love for our children and their deep desire for them to know Christ. There are a thousand stories to tell of our commitment to form our children in faith, one for each of God’s children in our programs, all made possible by your love. Perhaps you have attended a Funeral Mass in our church and experienced the loving embrace of this faithful parish community around the hearts of grieving families. I walked through the Parish Center on December 15 and witnessed the hard work, the profound respect and the dedicated service provided to all our clients of our St. Vincent de Paul Conference, literally bringing the meaning of Christmas to hundreds of families, all because of your love. God has called us for a marvelous purpose and we have well lived our mission to “Bring Christ to the World.” Whenever a person in need approaches me, I am always able to say, “Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary will stand with you in your need.” I say this because I know you love your neighbor. Now, our parish is your neighbor in need. In order for us to meet the demands of all who long to meet Christ in our midst, we need to increase our tithe to the Lord.

Three years ago we embarked upon a serious path to make stewardship a way of life. God has richly blessed our efforts with a deepening faith and an awakening of love in our community. Part of our commitment involved encouraging each family in our parish to prayerfully consider God’s call for the tithe of household income (5% to the Sunday Offering and 5% to other charities). The prophet Malachi teaches us that God says, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try me in this, says the Lord of hosts: shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven, to pour down blessing upon you without measure (Mal 3:10)?” This is the only time in all of scripture that the Lord invites us to dare Him. God is pleading with us to let go of our possessions because He wants us all to Himself. God wants to embrace us in such a tender, all loving way that we will never want for anything, resting securely in His deep, abiding love. The scriptural tithe is a necessary dimension of the spiritual life, a spiritual practice opening our hearts to love for God; a spiritual practice rewarded always with grace upon grace. Please remember the pledge I made to you last year: If any family who begins the spiritual practice of tithing does not experience blessings from God in the form of deepening love for

each other and growing faith in Jesus Christ, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish will refund their entire annual tithe, no questions asked. I recommend signing up for electronic giving; this is a way to act bodily, in your mind and heart, to solidify the commitment to tithe which you are making with your soul.

Over the last four years, our Sunday Offering has increased only bit by bit, not quite keeping up with inflation. All the while, our needs have grown. Dr. Hensley has worked diligently to reduce costs in the school and we have reduced expenses in the parish operations as well (a combined reduction of \$300,000). The staff of Assumption Parish love our mission; they know they are not being compensated as they would in a secular organization. Our mission is being accomplished with far fewer resources than anyone can really imagine. Still, we are at risk of not meeting our obligations for the construction loan, facilities maintenance and other ministries. I do not want a family to approach me and have to respond, "we cannot afford to help you at this time." The current, urgent need to position the parish for future stability is \$150,000.

I trust that God's blessings will be plentiful for us, through your love for one another. As we near the end of our third year of tithing, recall what Moses taught the people when they entered the promised land: "When you have finished setting aside all the tithes of your produce in the third year, declare before the Lord, your God, 'I have thus hearkened to the voice of the Lord, my God, doing just as you have commanded me. Look down, then, from heaven and bless your people' (Dt. 26:12-15)."

The fire burning in our courtyard is the flame of faith burning in your hearts. Please respond in this moment of need to spark our mission into a fire of love. Pray to God, with your family, and seek His counsel. Then make a contribution of \$100, or more, to Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish. Your contribution will be the answer to the next neighbor who loses work, to the next family who suffers a sudden death and the next step in your relationship with Jesus. We have committed ourselves to follow Mary, unreservedly, in her mission to bring Christ to the world. Thank you for living that mission so faithfully. God bless you.

Per Matrem Ad Filium,

Rev. Mitchell S. Doyen, Pastor