



*“...a Joy-Filled, Welcoming
Roman Catholic
Community of Faith!”*

September 21, 2017

Dear Friends and Fellow Parishioners,

Since I last wrote to you in August about the state of our great Parish, a number of issues have come to light of which you should be aware. I am not certain of the full impact the following information will have on our financial health, yet, in the spirit of complete transparency, you should be informed of the challenges we are facing.

- 1) Two of the three boilers and the fuel tank for the school building had to be replaced. While the Parish does not run the school, we still have ownership of the building and are now, as we have been in the past, responsible for what is termed the 'envelope' of the building. This includes, but is not limited to the roof, walls, heating and electrical systems. The cost to the Church of St. Cecilia so far, is in excess of \$50,000.00. We have secured a \$60,000.00 loan from 1st County Bank and the work to replace these items is nearly complete.
- 2) Last February we contracted with the architectural and engineering firm of Doyle and Coffin to conduct an in depth analysis of our buildings, systems and grounds. The final report is in. We are still digesting the full scope of findings. An initial reading indicates that there is nothing of emergency status that needs to be addressed, however, numerous findings state that many things on our campus are 'at or near the end of their life expectancy and that plans should be made to develop a replacement schedule and strategy.' This pertains to such items as roofs, parking lot, boilers, plumbing, electrical systems and air-conditioning. As potentially frightening as this could be, please remember our campus is more than sixty years old and therefore, it is understandable that many things would be at the end of their realistic life expectancy. We will continue to analyze the study and keep you abreast of plans and conditions for moving forward on recommendations given.
- 3) The very large and beautiful Beech trees between the rectory office and garage are diseased and need to be taken down as they pose a threat to buildings and human safety. The cost of their removal will be around \$10,000.00.
- 4) Our current approximate balances are \$15,000.00 in Operating account, \$25,000.00 in Capital Restoration and \$40,000.00 in CD's.
- 5) For the next four years we will be unable to increase our Capital Restoration balance because the money that you generously contribute to that monthly collection will be used to make payments on the loan taken to pay for the replacement boilers.
- 6) In the near future, the Diocese will begin a major, multi-million dollar capital campaign. In light of this, a moratorium has been mandated on all fundraising at the Parish level.
- 7) If all goes as planned with Vision 2020, the plan for Catholic School education for Stamford, in two years we will have a vacant school building. In order to be able to rent out space, which could be a tremendous financial lift for the Parish, many code and

compliance issues need to be addressed. These include numerous 'grand-fathered' items that will lose that status with a change in usage of the building. The Doyle and Coffin report puts an estimated cost of \$200,000.00 on these upgrades. There is a real possibility that, since there is a moratorium on fund raising at the Parish level, we could find ourselves with a vacant and un-rentable building. In addition, once the schools relocate to their newly renovated space on the campus of Trinity Catholic High School, the full financial responsibility for insurance and utilities transfers to the Church of St. Cecilia; expenses now being paid by the Catholic Academy of Stamford.

All of the above, of which we have no control, leaves us, on the surface, between a rock and a hard place! In early September, I and the Finance Team and Parish Trustees wrote to Bishop Caggiano expressing our concern and asking for some form of assistance or relief. Bishop Frank has asked to meet with us to discuss our concerns. Be assured I will keep you informed as to the outcome of that discussion.

In the meantime, we need to unite in our love for the Church of St. Cecilia and deal with what we can control. At this point, since there are so many unknowns, I believe the most important and productive actions we can take are prayer, discernment and creative problem solving.

Whatever the outcome of our meeting with Bishop Frank, there are some things each of us can do now to help strengthen our somewhat precarious financial outlook. We can reach out to others and work together to bring people into our Parish. We can invite family members and friends who have left back to the Church. We can be as hospitable, welcoming and inviting to fellow parishioners and guests. It will be very beneficial and spiritually rewarding if we can bring more people into our worshipping community. In addition, I believe it is imperative that we all make a personal and familial commitment to being more consistent in our attendance, participation in Parish life and financial support of the work of our Church.

This past Wednesday more than fifty of your fellow parishioners responded to an urgent invitation from me to gather so that I could present to them the information contained in this letter. After many questions and much discussion we began to brainstorm simple, positive actions we can take as a community to address the challenges we face. Over the course of the next few months, additional informational and discussion sessions will be scheduled so that together we can find constructive and strengthening paths through the obstacles presented to us.

Please get involved! Please stay positive! Please participate as fully as you are able in the life, ministry, and activities and, most importantly, worship and spiritual life of this great Parish. The members of the Church of St. Cecilia have faced countless challenges in our 91 year history and successfully addressed each of them. Each time we have emerged stronger, more united and more dedicated to our faith and our community. I have no doubt we will do the same as together we navigate what faces us now!

Peace and Blessings, Your Servant and Pastor



Fr. Bert Pinciario
Church of St. Cecilia