

Our Faith... Our Commitment... Our Future
The Campaign for Mother of Sorrows Parish



Campaign Case Statement



MOTHER *of* SORROWS

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Dear Parishioner,

Since I arrived at Mother of Sorrows Parish on October 30, 2008, I have noticed that many people are deeply involved in performing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Whether teaching the younger generation, visiting the sick, helping the poor, consoling the bereaved – and the list goes on and on - many are committed and active. Though many works of the parish are evident, and I find that much good happens which is never publicized, and this is certainly in keeping with the spirit of the gospel message.

The good works also take place in various other ways in our Diocese of Greensburg, and these likewise have been generously supported by our people in the past. This support has taken a number of forms throughout the years, and now it is expressed in the diocesan capital campaign entitled ***Today's Challenge ~ Tomorrow's Hope***. At Mother of Sorrows we are, after a professional feasibility study, combining a parish campaign with this diocesan effort. Our parish effort is ***Our Faith... Our Commitment... Our Future***. A successful program will help to address our parish needs as well as the requirements of our diocese.

Each parish member will be asked to participate as fully as possible in this endeavor. So, I ask that you do a few things:

- 1) When asked to learn more about this – say yes.
- 2) When asked to volunteer – say yes.
- 3) When asked to donate – say yes.
- 4) When asked to be an advocate for our parish and school – SAY YES.

Yes is such a powerful word. That was the word which Mary used when asked by God's representative to do something special, mysterious, and significant. Following the example of our Blessed Mother, patroness of our parish – say yes!

In Christ,

Rev. Thaddeus J. Kaczmarek

Stewardship as a Way of Life

“It was sixteen years ago, but it seems like only yesterday. I was suddenly confronted with serious surgery, which I never thought would happen to me. It always happened to others.

The memory is still there, and I recall vividly the days before the surgery. I really received the grace to ask myself, ‘What do I own, and what owns me?’ When you are wheeled into a surgery room, it really doesn’t matter who you are or what you possess. What counts is the confidence in a competent surgical staff and a good and gracious God. I know that my whole understanding and appreciation of the gifts and resources I possess took on new meaning.”

— Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy,
Archbishop of Seattle (deceased)

Clearly, these words reflect the truth that our material possessions are far less important than an intimate relationship with the Lord. In the early 1990s, the United States Catholic bishops collectively prayed and reflected on the hallmarks of Christian discipleship. With many solid biblical foundations, the bishops concluded that a disciple of Jesus is truly a thankful, responsible and generous caretaker of God’s many blessings. In short, Jesus’ disciples practice authentic stewardship.

Guided by Scripture, we believe that the Christian steward is a person whose prayer leads to a constant awareness that God is the creator of all blessings in life spiritual and material. Jesus presented the ultimate gift to God—the gift of his life — and we, too, are called to follow in Jesus’ footsteps by:

- Receiving God’s gifts gratefully
- Cultivating them responsibly
- Sharing them lovingly in justice with others, and
- Returning them with increase to the Lord.

An Invitation

Let us reflect on the many blessings the Lord has given us. Recognizing that all of our material goods are gifts from the Lord, we are asked in the Gospel to give back a portion of these gifts in thanksgiving for God’s generosity and goodness to us. Your gift is an opportunity to leave a Catholic legacy for generations to come. Scripture tells us that Christian stewardship goes beyond giving of our surplus. It is a gift made from our substance. It is in this spirit of Christian stewardship that we undertake this extraordinary campaign.

Our Faith... Our Commitment... Our Future... Our Campaign Prayer

Father in heaven, You have created all things and have entrusted them to us, Your servants, as a lasting sign of Your eternal goodness. We, Your people, have gratefully received these many precious gifts and know that we are to use them in accord with Your divine love and Your holy will.

We thank You and praise You for the countless blessings which we enjoy daily, especially the gift of life, the joy of love, the bonds of family ties, and the company of friends. Most of all, we thank You for our faith which helps us to fully appreciate Your care for us.

We pray that we may be generous as we give back to You a portion of those good gifts which You have given to us at Mother of Sorrows Parish.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

A Brief History of Mother of Sorrows Church

It all began March 31, 1935, in a room on the second floor above Tarr's store; this was the celebration of the first Mass. At the time, people brought their own chairs, or borrowed them from a funeral home in Braddock. Fr. George Hurley, from the very beginning, was intent on building an independent house of worship for the growing faith community in Murrysville.

In April of 1939, ground was broken for a church building; the men of the parish, and others from the surrounding community, helped to dig the foundation. On October 29, 1939, Monsignor Daniel Lawless of the Diocese of Pittsburgh was the celebrant at the Dedication Mass. The collection, \$7,000, allowed the church to start debt-free. In 1944, the Diocese of Pittsburgh canonically established Mother of Sorrows Parish, naming Fr. Gerald Schroth as the first pastor. As pastors came and went, and the population grew, the need to serve the faithful Catholics of this area continued to be of paramount importance. This gave way to the opening of the first three-grade school in 1962, headed by the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, who lived in the school until the parish was able to furnish a convent.

On May 11, 1963, Bishop Connare dedicated a new church/school building for Mother of Sorrows, and the faithful worshiped on the first floor of the school for nearly twenty years, until the dedication of the present church on March 21, 1982. However, the need to accommodate the growing faithful, as well as the growth in the school, necessitated yet another expansion, and in 2004, the renovated church and school buildings were rededicated.

Our history here in Murrysville has been one of faith, growth, and accommodation. Through prayer, ministry, and love for our fellow Catholics, Mother of Sorrows has stood as the beacon that has guided many families and individuals in their pursuit of understanding and growing closer to God. With that in mind, we have come to a crossroads. The last expansion of the campus, though necessary, has created financial challenges that hinder our ability to continue to provide for the spiritual needs and growth of our parish community. We believe that our combined capital campaign, ***Our Faith, Our Commitment, Our Future***, in conjunction with the Bishop's ***Today's Challenge ~ Tomorrow's Hope*** campaign will allow us the opportunity to relieve us of some of the immense financial obligation we are currently faced with.



The Path to Overcoming our Current Obstacles

We are hopeful that by reaching our campaign goal of \$3.5 million, with gifts that are payable over a five-year period, we will be able to significantly decrease our current debt obligations, allowing us to free up operating revenues to continue to provide for the daily needs of the parish. Once again, we hope that each one of you will prayerfully consider the importance of Mother of Sorrows in your daily life. As we fast approach the 75th anniversary of the first Mass in Murrysville, we look toward the future with optimism and a firm belief that our parish will continue to grow and thrive, and we ask that you take part in laying the path that we, as a faith community, will travel together for many years to come.

Our current situation is one where we have a total outstanding debt of approximately \$6.8 million. Of this, approximately \$1.1 million comprises the outstanding principal balance due on a Catholic Institute loan, and the balance is the outstanding principle on the bond issue. Both are 30-year debt obligations. Additionally, we have another \$400,000 outstanding in monthly diocesan obligations, which includes outstanding payroll and monthly consolidated billing charges. As you can see, this puts quite a bit of pressure on us to try and “keep up”. Our plan is a simple one. If we can meet our goal of \$3.5 million for this combined campaign, \$2.15 million will be returned to Mother of Sorrows Parish for the sole purpose of debt reduction. We have a 3-phase plan for addressing our current situation:

- Pay off the outstanding monthly diocesan obligations, so that we can become current on our operating expenses
- Pay off the outstanding balance of the Catholic Institute loan, freeing up approximately \$5,900 per month in operating revenue
- Deposit the remaining \$650,000 into our Parish Savings. These funds would then be utilized specifically towards payment on the bond issue

We have already taken many positive (and sometimes painful) steps to curtail normal operating expenses for the parish. We have made headway on some of the outstanding monthly billings. The school is on a path for continued enrollment growth. Most major capital improvement projects have fortunately been completed in the past several years, but we still have unexpected maintenance issues which require our immediate attention. *Your help in this campaign is essential.* Together we have accomplished great things, and again, through your prayerful and generous participation, we will succeed in charting a course for our parish that will allow us to grow into the future.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: *How much, exactly, is the debt?*

A: The total outstanding principal owed on the entire debt is approximately \$6,796,129.21, which is the combination of both the bond and the Catholic Institute loan. Additionally, we are currently in arrears on our monthly diocesan billings approximately \$400,000.

Q: *Where is the debt from?*

A: This obligation resulted from the original bond for the expansion of the parish and school. The additional Catholic Institute loan was taken out to cover additional projects not completed with the proceeds of the original bond, as well as payoff of outstanding monthly bills to the diocese, another outstanding loan with the Catholic Institute and the original capital campaign of 2004.

Q: *To whom is the debt owed?*

A: The bond is held by the Bank of Northern Ireland through the Diocese of Greensburg, and is a 30-year note, payable through June 30, 2033. The loan is through the Catholic Institute of Greensburg, and is a 30-year loan, payable through May 31, 2035.

Q: *Why didn't we budget better? How did we get into this situation?*

A: When the campus expansion was originally planned, much of the planning centered on the school. At that time, an enrollment and growth study for the school was conducted by the diocese and the parish, which was used as a basis for the bond. Unfortunately, those projections did not materialize. As a result, the ability of the school to meet their annual obligation for the bond was not possible, and the parish assumed responsibility in order to meet our obligations to both the bond holder and the Catholic Institute. This, then, affected the parish's ability to keep up with its day-to-day operations, which contributed to the outstanding monthly billings which we are now faced with.

Q: *What benefit, specifically, will come from paying down the debt now?*

A: As with any mortgage, loan, or other financial obligation, the benefit of eliminating the burden sooner, rather than later, allows for better use of parish funds. Eliminating the arrears and the Catholic Institute loan will provide more operating revenue that the parish can utilize for continued operations, as well as investing in faith-based programs to help expand and grow our faith family. Additionally, the relief of the loan will allow the parish to begin to build up funds in our savings, which can be drawn upon when extraordinary needs arise, such as unforeseen maintenance costs.

Q: *Is the diocese doing anything to assist us?*

A: The diocese has been very supportive of both our situation and the efforts we are making to move forward. The diocese has granted our requests over the last few years to have our annual DLA goal reduced. They also agreed to reduce our goal for the Bishop's ***Today's Challenge...Tomorrow's Hope*** campaign, since we are doing a combined campaign. Additionally, the diocese has not been charging any interest on the monthly arrears, which has allowed us to avoid any further penalties.

Q: *I notice that there are many new statues and other items throughout the parish. Why did we spend money on these items when we have debt that we are struggling to pay?*

A: Those items that you see throughout the church represent *memorials*. Memorials are dedicated gifts by individuals/groups that have contributed funds for a specific item/project. Memorials are completely funded by the dedicator(s), and no parish funds were spent on their procurement. In addition, there was a Memorial Fund that was created during the Building Campaign which had approximately \$75,000. These monies were also utilized in obtaining memorials that were installed in the church.

Q: *Is anything else currently being done to help alleviate the debt?*

A: Yes! In your monthly envelope packet, there is an envelope for Debt Reduction. Monies contributed via this envelope are specifically utilized toward the debt.

Q: *I am hesitant. So much has happened in our parish over the last few years. Why should I contribute?*

A: Although our parish has seen its share of trying times, we have always been able to come together as a faith family and weather them. It is our faith, and our belief as Catholics, that allows us to continue to forge ahead. We ask, as always, that you pray and consider what it is to truly be a forgiving and faithful people of Mother of Sorrows.

Q: *Have funds been mismanaged/misappropriated? Has this contributed to our current situation?*

A: Absolutely not. There has been no misappropriation of any of the gifts contributed by our faithful parishioners. As a matter of fact, we had two financial audits/reviews conducted, in 2007 and 2009, and all records were found to be in perfect order. In fact, it was noted that Mother of Sorrows has the most accurate and detailed record-keeping ever seen by the auditors!

Q: *Why are we paying for full-color weekly bulletins when we can't pay our debt?*

A: Actually, we don't pay anything for our bulletins! We recently switched printing companies, and the new company is able to provide full color throughout the bulletin at no cost to us. The revenues generated by the advertisers in our bulletin offset any cost to us. Additionally, the new company allows us to submit bulletin inserts, which they will print and include along with the regular weekly information. We used to print and stuff inserts ourselves, so we are actually *saving* money with the new company!

Q: *How are you determining how much to ask each family?*

A: We look at the past generosity of each family to the parish to determine individual gift requests. We do not ask for equal giving from each family, but we do ask for equal sacrifice. Proportionate giving will allow each family to support the campaign in the best way for them.

Q: *What about the economy?*

A: While we appreciate that the current economy is not as strong as it could be, we currently have a great opportunity to conduct a Combined Campaign that focuses so much on our own needs (if we did not conduct the Combined Campaign, we would still be participating in the wider Diocesan campaign). Also, the ability to pledge over a five-year period will allow people to make commitments that support Mother of Sorrows well beyond the current economic situation.