



ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE PARISH

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And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory of the Father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

With everything that has impacted our lives in the last couple of years, I pray this Christmas we can just enjoy the presence of Jesus in our lives. Hopefully this newsletter gets to your home before Christmas, but with supply chain disruptions, nothing is certain. For a period of time, let us put aside the thoughts of Covid and vaccines. Let us put aside the thoughts of hurricane recovery. Let us put aside the thoughts of the economy and politics. And let us just dwell upon the fact that God sent us His only Son to be with us and show us the way to the Father. Because the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us, we can be truly joy-filled and focus on God's love for each one of us.

Throughout this newsletter, we can see the love God has poured on us through our parish at St. Matthew the Apostle. You can see how our school is thriving and our ministries are beginning to resume - dare I use the word - "normal" activities. Let us allow this Christmas season to not only welcome our savior into the world, but also to allow us to look forward with renewed vigor and joy to new beginnings in our parish—new beginnings that look forward to things like a ministry fair, a CYO March for Life trip, crawfish cook-off, CYO fish fry, KC dinners,



a Lenten Mission, a school Gala, season 2 of The Chosen discussion group, another group consecration to St. Joseph, a Mass for the Disabled, an outdoor adoration and worship on the Feast of the Annunciation, more religious education opportunities and much, much more for our parish.

Let our New Year's resolutions include spending more time as a parish worshipping, learning and enjoying fellowship.

May your Christmas be filled with joy and may your New Year lead you closer to Jesus.

God bless,

Fr. Lee Poche, Pastor

Message from Principal Tony Bonura

Parishioners,

The past two school years have been a period of great growth for our school. Our enrollment has grown by 41 students, a 13% growth in one year. This growth places St. Matthew in the top 5% nationally among Catholic schools in terms of enrollment increase and reverses a recent trend of declining enrollment. The increase is a direct result of a shared commitment from all of us engaging as partners in growing this important ministry of our parish and providing our wider community with the best option for their child's schooling. While last year we focused on reengaging the St. Matthew

community and reminding each other of the great history of success at our school, this year we have intentionally focused inward. After a year of bringing our ministry to the people and inviting them to join us, it is clear that the invitation has been accepted. The administration, teachers and parents, with great intention, recognize that we must have "our house" ready for guests. This starts with a committed faculty and parents that have embraced the call as a principle of our faith to resist the status quo.

Rejecting the status quo is reflected in our commitment to partner with our parents and parish leaders to find new and exciting ways for our students to engage and grow in their faith. This is highlighted in our renewed virtues of the month program, our parent-led K4J afterschool program and the commitment of our parents to partner with Father Lee and Father Francis in reigniting our youth group (Matt's Cat's). Our school is moving beyond the religious curriculum of the school day

and toward a place of continuous service to our parish as a whole. We continually push the envelope to find ways for our students to practice their faith in a way that makes them stronger and spurs them on to be leaders of their faith community.



From an academic perspective, we continue to challenge the status quo by continually improving our spaces and curriculum in ways that embrace the needs of the 21st century learner. This is reflected in the renovation of the "Old Rectory" to accommodate our growing Little

Crusader program. Another example of improving our spaces is the transformation of our library space into a modern learning studio that not only enhances the reading experience of our students, but also allows our students to develop the collaborative, creative and communication skills needed in today's world. Additionally, this space will provide us with new ways to expand our STEAM curriculum. It is also reflected in our new "Coding Lab." Through the use of 30 new iPads, our students are learning the language of computer coding. Learning coding not only gives them the advantage of learning computer skills that

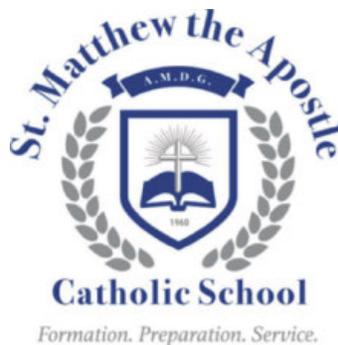
are timely to their generation, but also, as research shows, improves students' ability to think creatively and strategically, benefitting them in other subject areas.

Some other initiatives that we have undertaken this school year include:

- Implementation of Lexia Core 5, a research-based differentiated reading program that systematically targets the skill gaps in each individual student.
- Implementation of Dreambox Learning Math, an interactive, adaptive, self-paced supplemental math program that teaches strategies for manipulating numbers, moving students from rote memorization of facts and formulas to abstract thinking.
- New Science curriculum for grades 3-7 that moves us to a more blended approach to teaching science that will allow students to learn science through increased real-world experiences.

As you can see, we have been very busy over the first three quarters of the school year, but we are just scratching the surface of where we are headed. If you are curious about some of the other great things happening at our school, please visit our brand-new website (smaschool.net). Our new website has all the information you need as well as interactive features to get you connected with this wonderful ministry of our parish.

Tony Bonura
Principal



Teacher Spotlight

Interview with Mrs. Sabrina Trouard

When did you start teaching at SMA?

I started teaching in 2000. I have been in the same classroom teaching first grade the entire time.

What would students be surprised to find out about you?

One thing I think they may be surprised to know is that teaching is in my blood. My mom and grandma both taught at my elementary school. On my very first day of teaching ever (at SMA) a student gave me a picture of Mickey and Minnie that were taken out of my grandmother's classroom by Mrs. Lynne Perronne, who worked with her at the time. They have not moved from their spot in my classroom in over 20 years. I look at them often and think of my Mimi.

If you won the lottery, what would you do?

If I won the lottery, I would remodel our house. We have been there for 12 years and it could use a nice update.

What makes a "good day" in the classroom?

A good day in the classroom is when something unplanned happens and a planned lesson takes an amazing turn. We have a great conversation about a topic or a small idea turns into a great learning experience.

What accomplishment fills you with pride so far this year?

As silly as it sounds, one of my best days so far this year was having my students come in and being able to see their smiling faces without a



mask. That day just felt different. They participated more and the air in the room was just cheerier.

What is your favorite dish from the cafeteria?

NO question - the Lasagna!!

What inspires you?

The lightbulb moments are what continue to inspire me. First grade is a tough year. The students grow up and learn so much from August to May. When things start to click for them, reading becomes automatic and their love of learning gets sparked. That is why I continue to do what I do. I also love seeing "my students" as they continue to grow through St. Matthew. I beam with pride when a former struggling reader is now reading at mass or makes the honor roll. I feel like I was a part of that.

If you could pass on any wisdom to your students, what would you share?

Don't give up!! Things will not always be easy. Take the tough times and learn from them. God has a plan that is so much bigger than us. Lean on Him and keep going.

How do you think students will remember you?

My older students will remember me as the "Cow Teacher" when my class had over 200 cows in it and we "Moooved into First Grade" and my current students, that's a tough one. I think some of them will remember me as Emma, Gavin and Charlotte's mom. It's fun to see them see me outside of school and realize I am just like their mom at the grocery or attending a kid's birthday party.

Financial Update

We are grateful for all the blessings that God has given us especially our own parish here at St. Matthew the Apostle. We are also grateful for your generosity as we try to be good stewards of the parish's resources.

As the chart on this page of Regular Church Income (excluding capital campaigns) indicates, our income has declined over the last three years. The pandemic has certainly had an impact on our finances and our attendance at Masses. Average weekly Mass attendance prior to the pandemic was about 1,300 per weekend. Recently, the attendance has averaged between 900 and 950 per weekend. Hurricane Ida has also reduced our income in the current fiscal year.

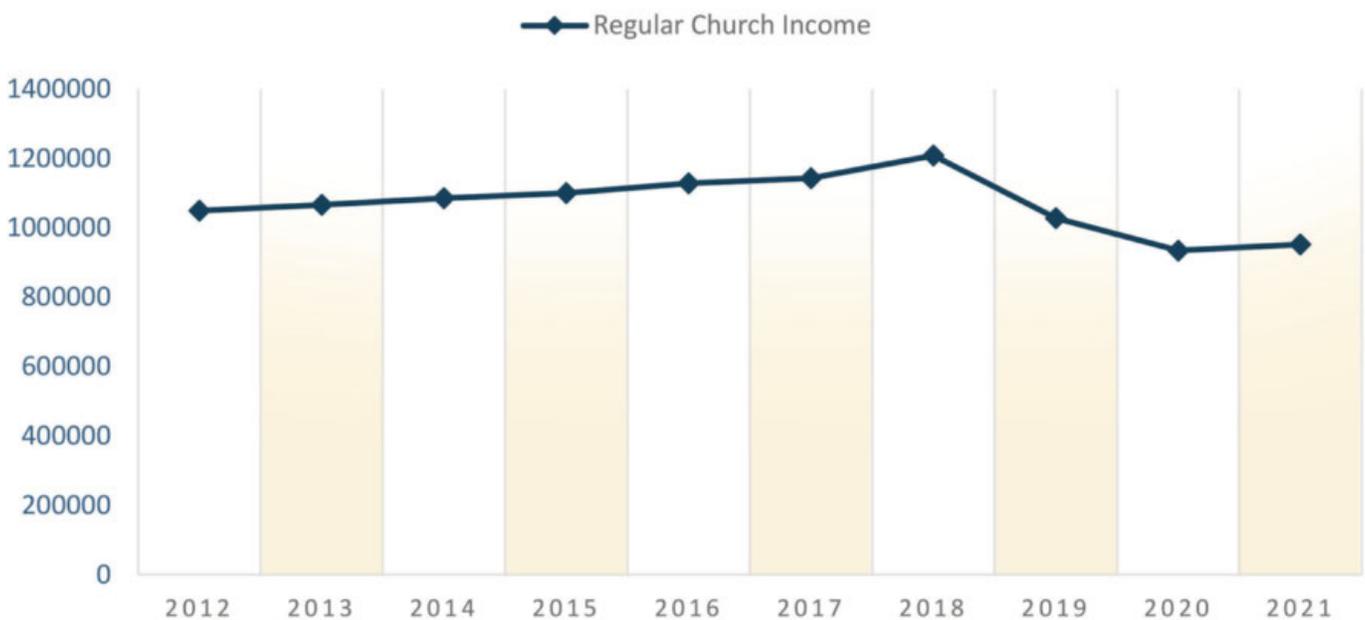
Unfortunately, as revenue has gone down, expenses will increase in the coming year. So far, we have had to spend in excess of \$100,000 in Hurricane Ida repairs and continue to work to get our buildings repaired. With this reduced income and increased

expenses, we have tried not to reduce any services provided and will, in fact, increase religious education opportunities. We realize most of us are feeling the financial impacts of the pandemic and of Hurricane Ida; however, if you are in a position to increase your support, we appreciate your generosity.

Until we can stabilize our operational income, I have temporarily put on hold the project to physically separate the parish office from the rectory. As we have discussed, this is a necessary project for safe environment purposes, however at this time it would not be prudent to proceed. We will continue to develop a master site plan for the campus and will soon resume the project to refurbish or replace the Jefferson Highway sign.

We have overcome many challenges in the last few years. This financial challenge is just one more way for us to come together as a parish.

ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE CHURCH INCOME TRENDS



Financial Update

ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE CHURCH SUMMARY OF PARISH FINANCES — THREE YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 2021

	Actuals	Actuals	Actuals
	Year Ending	Year Ending	Year Ending
	June 30, 2019	June 30, 2020	June 30, 2021
Income			
Ordinary Income: Regular Collections	816,710.54	759,037.20	770,270.67
Ordinary Income: Bldg. & Main. Collections	52,747.50	49,283.00	48,412.50
Extraordinary Income	158,662.52	126,584.20	133,501.06
Total Church Income	<u>1,028,120.56</u>	<u>934,904.40</u>	<u>952,184.23</u>
Expenses			
Personnel	450,595.44	384,310.83	415,435.39
Salaries, Stipends, benefits & taxes: pastor, p. vicar, assisting priests, full & parttime staff, accounting, music, seminarian, religious ed			
Other Parish Expenses	344,326.24	240,789.84	294,340.10
School Financial Support	97,884.88	170,335.24	84,471.13
Archdiocesan Assessments	159,869.97	179,978.03	166,584.91
Total Church Expenses	<u>1,052,676.53</u>	<u>975,413.94</u>	<u>960,831.53</u>
Surplus (Deficit) in Church Operations	<u>(24,555.97)</u>	<u>(40,509.54)</u>	<u>(8,647.30)</u>
Other Sources of Cash			
Insurance Proceeds		5,347.80	
Property Insurance Reimbursement			
Ministry Income		1,163.82	
Special Building Collections/Campaigns	34,008.21	26,115.44	5,973.00
Investment Activity		(1,024.58)	6,435.31
Total Other Sources of Cash	<u>34,008.21</u>	<u>31,602.48</u>	<u>12,408.31</u>
Other Uses of Cash			
Capital Expenditures	2,087.15	15,085.99	25,028.96
Repairs Covered by Insurance			
Total Other Uses of Cash	<u>2,087.15</u>	<u>15,085.99</u>	<u>25,028.96</u>
Total Increase (Decrease) in Cash	<u>7,365.09</u>	<u>(23,993.05)</u>	<u>(21,267.95)</u>
Totals exclude diocesan collections, church renovation, PPP & internal account transfers			

Parish Youth Update

by Becci Sheptock



It feels like we have turned a corner, doesn't it? The pandemic and hurricane Ida are "almost" in our rearview mirror; and things are looking up! After a year of scaling back, religious education and youth activities at St. Matthew the Apostle are picking up again, and I am blessed to witness and help with this "comeback."

This past summer we held a modified version of Labor of Love (LOL), getting together for a day of fellowship, prayer and work around the SMA campus. It was an inspiring moment and we look forward to offering a closer-to-normal LOL next summer.

We have a record number of teens signed up for Confirmation preparation at St. Matthew the Apostle. Justin Genovese and I have teamed up to lead the program and are excited to accompany the candidates in this exciting journey. Please pray for our teens as they deepen their faith and grow closer to God.

The wider St. Matthew the Apostle Parish community has also had an opportunity to grow in their faith at the presentation of Season One of The Chosen series. This first-ever series on the life of Jesus is being shown weekly in the MBC, with sharing and discussion following each episode. The series has provided us all a unique occasion to see the Gospel brought to life and to reflect on the lives of those who met and followed Christ. We are excited to be able to offer Season Two of The Chosen next semester; dates and times will be published soon.

St. Matthew's CYO has also started to pick up again, holding monthly meetings, attending 6 a.m. Mass on "Faithful Fridays," and praying the rosary together at "Beads and Beignets." The new 2021-2022 CYO Board, comprised of Juniors and Seniors from Dominican, Brother Martin, Mount Carmel and Academy of the Sacred Heart, has done an excellent job of preparing and planning activities for the upcoming year. I am grateful that we have such an enthusiastic and responsible group of teens spearheading the SMA CYO. Exciting events are on the horizon.

Upcoming CYO events include Christmas caroling and a living nativity in December and a pilgrimage to the March for Life in Washington, DC in January. Last year, due to the pandemic, the March for Life scaled down the nation's largest pro-life demonstration and rally. This year, however, the March is on and St. Matthew's teens are ready to attend and support life. Help the SMA CYO teens fundraise for the March by buying a Louisiana Right to Life 2022 calendar; calendars are available in the church office for \$5 each.

On a personal note, I have now been at St. Matthew the Apostle parish and school for almost six months and have been overwhelmed by the welcome and support I have received. I am eager to continue bringing back events and passionate about finding new ways for us all to encounter Our Lord.



Congratulations

TO OUR 2021 ANNIVERSARY COUPLES



70 Years of Marriage
Eugene and Vivian Barilleaux

60 Years of Marriage
Bernard and Betty Lacour

50 Years of Marriage
Morris and MaryAnn Ambrosia
Eric and Sharon Brauner
Joe and Pat Dominio
Robert and Debra Garrity
Lloyd and Ann Goebel
Henry and Kay Johnston
George and Cindy Rucker
Cloyd and Carmela VanHook

40 Years of Marriage
Mark and Cheri Lagarde
Richard and Sheila Marriott
Cecil and Karen Soileau

25 Years of Marriage
Bryan and Stacy Centanni
Greg and Dania Flores
Steve and Karen Gelling
Wayne and Linda King
Jeff and Tina Messina
Seth and Jeanne Schaumburg



Altar Servers



Archbishop Aymond



Knights of Columbus



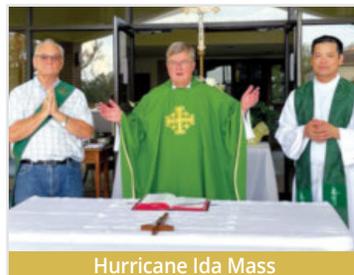
The Chosen



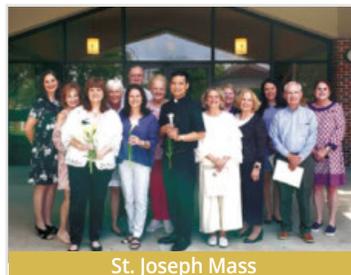
Little Crusaders



Family Day



Hurricane Ida Mass



St. Joseph Mass



St. Vincent de Paul



St. Matthew the Apostle Parish
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Christmas Mass Schedule

Friday, December 24th

4:00 p.m. (Church) 4 p.m. (MBC),
6:00 p.m., 10:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 25th

7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m. (no 4:00 p.m. Mass)

Sunday, December 26th

7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m.

New Year

(Not A Holy Day of Obligation)

Saturday, January 1st

9:15 a.m., 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 2nd

7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m.

Lorraine Hess

Light of the World Advent Concert

Thursday, December 16th

7pm

St. Matthew the Apostle Church

10021 Jefferson Hwy, River Ridge

www.lorrainehess.com. Free Will Offering

