FROM THE PASTOR

With this column I would like to update you in regard to several areas of our parish’s life.

1. **Our Parish Finances:** First and foremost, I want to thank all those who have made a commitment of financial support to our parish community during our financial stewardship campaign this fall. Please know your commitment of financial support to our parish community is greatly appreciated. Your pledge—no matter the size—is important and makes a difference. It allows us to continue to offer the many programs, ministries and services that are the hallmark of our Basilica community.

In regard to our parish finances, as I write this column we are behind in our anticipated income at this point in our fiscal year. Our finance committee monitors our income and expenses closely, so if it becomes necessary we can make the appropriate decisions about balancing our parish budget.

I am hopeful that with our collections at Christmas and with year-end giving we will be back on track with our projected income. Thank you to all of those who support our Basilica community financially. Please know of my great gratitude for your ongoing financial support.

2. **Advent and Christmas Events/Activities at The Basilica:** As we move into the Season of Advent and Christmas, there are several events/activities at The Basilica which you are invited to attend. More details are inside this bulletin or on the website.

- **On Friday December 1st 7:00pm** there will be a production of *A Christmas Carol*—this beautiful Christmas story will be held in The Basilica Church.
- **On Saturday, December 2 beginning at 8:30am,** we will have our Parish Advent Retreat *Living the Incarnation.* Archbishop Hebdab will be with us that day to lead us on this retreat.
- **On Sunday, December 3** we will hold our annual Fair Trade Market from 8:30am to 3:00pm. Great gifts will be available from local vendors, just in time for Christmas giving.
- **Taizé prayer** with the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be on **Tuesday, December 12**.
- **The Basilica will also be hosting The Messiah on Thursday, December 14 and Friday, December 15 at 8:00pm.**
- **On Sunday, December 17** our Cathedral Choristers, Children’s Choir, Cherubs, and Juventus, as well as the children of the Learning Program, will present *Room for Christmas* by Mark Burrows.

Finally, we hope you will plan on joining us for one of our Masses on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Our Mass schedule is available on our website.

3. **Sanctuary Supporting Congregation:** One of the values we strive to live every day at The Basilica is compassion. As such, we become aware of our shared brokenness. We deeply respect all of God’s people and gratefully welcome all as Christ, as we share hospitality, love, acceptance, and care. We are a community serving the needs of people in our community. Every day we provide basic tangible and physical resources such as sandwiches, clothing, toiletries, shoes, bus cards, help with I.D. cards, and assistance with transportation.

For the past couple of months our parish leadership has been discussing the possibility of The Basilica becoming a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation. In becoming a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation, we would continue to do what we currently do for those who come to our St. Vincent de Paul Ministry, many of them from Ascension, our sister parish in North Minneapolis. We would also continue our advocacy work and our prayerful support particularly for those who are on the margins and in need. The difference would be that we would be named as part of a network of congregations that are committed to supporting this work.

Now admittedly in today’s world, the word “Sanctuary” may come with a lot of baggage. It may be helpful to note, though, that it shares the same root as the Latin word: “Sanctus,” which means holy. Jesus has told us that “whateveryou do to the least of my brothers, you do for me.” Additionally, on his trip to Colombia this past September Pope Francis called on Catholics to “promote the dignity of all our brothers and sisters, particularly the poor and the excluded of society, those who are abandoned, immigrants, and those who suffer violence and human trafficking.” Responding without judgment to the needs of those who come to our doors is what we are called to do as followers of Jesus Christ.

Becoming a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation is very different form being a Sanctuary Congregation. Being a Sanctuary Congregation requires additional commitments that could put The Basilica at some legal risk. As your pastor, I cannot do that in this circumstance. This is why our leadership has been carefully evaluating Sanctuary Supporting Congregations which have significantly fewer commitments and would serve as a way to continue to compassionately serve a community in need and as an outcome of living our faith.
I would encourage anyone who has questions or concerns about this issue to take them to prayer. If after praying about them, you would like to share them with me or with a member of our parish council, you can contact us through our parish website. As we continue to discuss this important issue we will need your thoughts and your prayers to do what is right for our Parish and to follow our faith calling.

4. Dedication of our Homeless Jesus Sculpture: On Sunday, November 19, we officially dedicated our Homeless Jesus Sculpture. The sculpture is at the foot of The Basilica steps and it depicts a life-size Christ figure shrouded in a blanket on a park bench. Timothy P. Schmalz is the creator of the sculpture. It is an international symbol of awareness and compassion for the homeless. The purpose of the sculpture is not just to help us be aware of the needs of the homeless in our midst, but also to inspire us to be more compassionate and charitable, that we might strive to see Jesus in each person we meet. It will also challenge us to take action to help end homelessness locally and around the world. The sculpture was funded by an anonymous group of donors who care about the homeless and are committed to our Basilica’s out reach to them.

5. Updating our Parish Strategic Plan: Our current Strategic Plan will expire in 2018. Given this, we need to refresh it, so it can guide us into the future. As in the past this will be a community process in which parishioners will be invited to give their input. The work on updating our Strategic Plan has already begun, as we look at who and what resources we will need to move this work forward. I will continue to update you as this work continues.

This plan will serve as a road map to guide and direct our efforts for the next three to five years. Our efforts will help us identify those ministries, programs, services, etc. that are important and necessary for our parish community. Additionally, though, we have also been challenged to look ahead in terms of what else we can and should do.

I find Strategic Planning to be an exciting process. More importantly, though, it is also a necessary process. The reason we engage in strategic planning is simple. “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29.18). If we don't consciously and prayerfully plan for our future, we are at risk of drifting into a future not of our choosing and certainly not of our making.

You will be hearing more about this issue in the weeks and months ahead. I wanted to mention it now, though, so you will be aware of what is coming.

6. Special Collections: While no one is fond of special collections, it is heartening for me to report that the people of The Basilica have been very generous to the last few special collections here.

- On the weekend of September 9 and 10, $15,539 was contributed to help those impacted by Hurricane Harvey.
- On the weekend of September 16 and 17, $9,672 was contributed to help fund our St. Vincent de Paul Ministry.

The contributions to these collections testify to the generosity of the people of The Basilica. Please know of my gratitude for your generous response to these collections.

7. Harvest Pack Packaging Event: After the Masses on Sunday, October 8 over 140 volunteers came together to help package 27,000 meals. Half of these meals will go to Community Emergency Services in Minneapolis and the other half will be sent to the Philippines and Haiti. There were a variety of ages of the volunteers and from the evaluations, everyone thought it was an enjoyable, worthwhile, and important activity. Everyone also thought there should be future events similar to it. Our thanks to all those who helped with this event.

8. Liturgical Consultant: Although we will need to continue to tuck point the exterior of The Basilica, it is structurally sound and in good repair. As we look toward the future, though, we know that at some point we will have to consider the renovation and refurbishing of the interior of The Basilica. We will also need to look at developing a master plan for our entire parish campus. To this end, The Basilica Landmark, with the encouragement of our parish leadership, has provided funding for the engagement of a Liturgical Consultant to guide us as we look toward the future of our beautiful Basilica and its campus.

The Liturgical Consultant is an objective outsider who will help us look through the lens of liturgical, artistic, and architectural principles to assist us in developing a master plan for our campus and the renovation and renewal of our Basilica that represents our vision and our values.

You will hear more about the work of this Consultant in the weeks and months ahead. I wanted to share this information with you now, though, as we begin what I’m sure will be an informative and exciting process.

Rev. John M. Bauer
Pastor, The Basilica of Saint Mary