

Pastoral Letter Regarding 2025

March 5, 2026

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Peace to you! Since you last received a “State of the Parishes” letter in February 2025, our Catholic community has seen many changes. We have a new Pope and a new pastor. Fr. Burish went to his new assignment in Rome, Fr. Tim Oudenhoven was parish administrator for two months, and I became your pastor on July 1st. I am honored to be your new pastor. Change is not usually easy, and so I am grateful that you have embraced me as we have been adjusting to my new mission here in the Chippewa area. I want to use the opportunity of this “Pastoral Letter” to give you an overview of how we are doing and what is going on in our Catholic community at Our Lady of the Falls.

Staying Connected and Informed

I realize that good communication is challenging and keeping people informed during this year of changes could have been better. I am committed to continual improvement in this area. However, communication is a two-way street. Please stay connected and informed by visiting our website, Facebook page, YouTube channel, MyParish App, reading the printed bulletin, or by signing up for our various email communications via this link <http://tinyurl.com/bdh5cy9d> or by contacting the parish office.

Leadership

Soon after I arrived here, I realized that I would need to adjust my ways of “being a pastor.” Going from one parish of 200 families to three parishes of 1,300-1,400 families, from one parish staff member to a dozen staff, plus being the Dean of the Chippewa Deanery and the head of MACS, was going to stretch my leadership skills. And so it has! Every good leader has a team surrounding them who can bring different talents, strengths, and styles to serve a community well. I needed such a group, and so I formed a **Parishes Leadership Team** (PLT). I have been meeting with this group weekly since November. They are not an advisory board, but exist to share with me the work of shepherding this flock. They help me to do the work of pastoring. It is not an honorary role, but rather a big responsibility. I am so grateful for this team, who have built up my confidence that I can be the best pastor that I can be and that the people of OLF deserve.

The members of the Parishes Leadership Team are: Mrs. Erin Brick (Holy Ghost parishioner), Mrs. Molly Bushman (Holy Ghost parishioner and President of MACS), Mr. Scott Pulver (St. Bridget parishioner and member of Pastoral Council), Deacon Kevin

DeCook (Notre Dame, Director of Finance Team), Fr. Nowicki (Parochial Vicar), Mr. John Shakal (Notre Dame parishioner and OLF Director of Evangelization).

Each parish has a **Finance Council** which is a consultative body that helps the pastor steward the temporal goods of our parish (finances, buildings, etc...). I am grateful for the members of each finance council for their expertise and dedication. I am also grateful for Deacon Kevin DeCook, who supports our finance staff and sits on each finance council.

Members of Notre Dame Finance Council: Joseph Petefish, John Mattot, Karen Goettl, Daniel Wollmer.

Members of Holy Ghost Finance Council: John Abbe, Dave See, Keith Jones, Patrick Bushman.

Members of St. Bridget Finance Council: Scott Pulver, Ted Amelse, Tim Anderson, Dan Raffesberger, Sister Yvonne Hiess.

The **Pastoral Council** is a consultative body whose purview is all the non-temporal activity of the parish. We have a combined parish council at OLF. On Thursday, March 12th we will have our first meeting since I have become pastor. There are four members that represent all three parishes and represent the parishioners involved in the four main domains of pastoral activity. These members keep in regular contact with the leaders of these ministries about their efforts, challenges, and ideas for collaboration.

Our pastoral council members are: Tim Strader (Holy Ghost parishioner) for Sacred Worship, Jill Wollmer (Notre Dame parishioner) for Family Life, Caleb Heckman (OLF Faith Formation coordinator) for Catholic Education, and Scott Pulver (St. Bridget parishioner) for Social Concerns.

Mission and Evangelization

I see that a growing strength in our Chippewa area community is our focus on evangelization and taking seriously our mission from Jesus to proclaim the Gospel to all people. This effort is only possible if we remain rooted in prayer and grow closer to Jesus Christ. After the completion of the renovation of the Goldsmith Chapel and the construction of the Chapel Annex, which was blessed on October 19, 2025, there has been a concerted effort to move closer to 24/7 adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Chippewa Valley. Imagine someone praying for our community and your intentions nonstop. We currently have one or multiple people praying continuously from 8:00 am on Sunday until 1:00 pm on Friday every week. This act of faith makes concrete our belief that without Jesus, we can do nothing. He is the source of every blessing. He is our hope. He is the reason for our parishes and the One we serve.

I am growing more excited about launching a seven year Spiritual Campaign for our Catholic community in the Chippewa area, as we prepare for the Holy Year of 2033, the 2,000th anniversary of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. More details will be coming soon about this effort which seeks to strengthen our union with Jesus Christ.

Because of God's grace, and your prayers and invitations, more people are entering the process of Christian Initiation at OLF. Last Easter (2025) we welcomed 25 persons into the Catholic Church family! This year our group has grown to 38 persons hoping to enter the Church this Easter season. We also have had 10 more individuals begin the first phase more recently. Please pray for them. Do you know any non-Catholics who are interested in learning more about the Catholic Faith, or Catholics who have not been fully initiated into the Church (have not received Confirmation or First Holy Communion)? Please invite them to come to Christian Initiation!

Some of those coming into the Church are students and families that encountered Jesus at McDonnell Area Catholic Schools, our parishes' largest apostolate, which partners with over 300 households to educate children ages 3-18 in the Faith. I am pleased with the ways our Catholic schools continue to grow in their faith-based mission of evangelization, including campus ministry and a major transformation to a Catholic Liberal Arts educational philosophy, as an integral part of MACS' 2030 Strategic Plan.

Because there are more and more people at our parishes who want to grow in their faith and be supported as they lead others in discipleship, we hired Mrs. Angie Katz in 2025 to be our new Coordinator of Discipleship for OLF. She coordinates our Emmaus Discipleship formation process and walks with those who are seeking a closer following of Jesus Christ in discipleship groups.

Time, Talent, and Treasure

You are not an accessory or "benchwarmer." God has created us all for so much more! You are a member of Jesus Christ's family, a son or daughter of the Eternal Father. We cannot be saved, live the joyfully abundant life that Jesus desires to give us, or go out to invite others into the Church on our own. We are a family. We are not orphans. We are brothers and sisters of One Lord, and the Church is our mother. Whether we are homebound, in our most active years, or 4 years old, we all have a crucial place in Jesus' daring plan to save the human race and bring about the coming Kingdom. There are so many ways to take part in this most important mission: Praying daily for your parish family and offering your sufferings for those who are far from Christ, loving and serving your family members, sharing the burdens of your friends and neighbors, especially those who are materially or spiritually poor, serving in a ministry at your parish, growing in your knowledge of the teachings of Jesus and the Church, gathering with a few parishioners for fellowship and support, and much more. We

know of over 500 parishioners who are actively serving our parishes. But we have many who are not actively engaged, whether in giving financially, or with their talents and time. I would rather have a parish where everyone gives a small amount according to their means, but struggles to pay the bills, than a parish which has no financial concerns but only a few richer people contribute. The same is true for talent and time. The first is a family. The second is a social club or NGO. Let us encourage each other to grow in Christian charity and generosity for the sake of our brothers and sisters in Christ, so that our parishes will more and more be a true spiritual home for every parishioner and for those whom God wants to become new members of His family!

Looking Ahead

Our Lady of the Falls is canonically and legally three distinct parishes, but one Catholic family. I firmly believe that we are stronger together than we are apart. In the 1870's, Fr. Charles Goldsmith crafted a coat of arms with symbols representing the various ethnic groups that settled in the Chippewa Valley. This coat of arms is enshrined in stained glass at the church of Notre Dame that includes the French phrase, "Toujours d'Accord," which means "Always in agreement." Poetically, I like my translation of "always together" or "always in harmony." Although our ancestors came from distinct and different backgrounds, they harmoniously united in Christ and as fellow citizens of this nation.

Our three parishes also have distinct "personalities," stories, strengths, and struggles. Like a musical trio, however, these three distinct voices can come together into a beautiful harmony, a hymn of praise that glorifies the Holy Trinity. We are distinct, but united in the Lord Jesus and our Catholic Faith. Each parish community has its own unique gifts. I see the gift of reverent prayer and humble service at Notre Dame, the openness to others and tenacity of Holy Ghost, the caring closeness and communal commitment of St. Bridget. There are many more!

There has been a lot of change in recent times. With change and the possibility of more change, there are many emotions. There is uncertainty and fears, grief and sadness for the ending of former things, and hope and excitement for future things yet to be born. Let our hearts remain open! Open to the Holy Ghost's promptings, to each other, and to those whom Jesus is calling to become members of our Catholic family. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is leading us to good pastures in 2026 and beyond.

In the hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,
-Fr. Daniel Sedlacek

Appendix: Parish Statistics and Financial Reports

Here are some parish statistics from our annual Bishop's Report from the last fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Holy Ghost Parish

- Households in the parish: 533
- New members/households in the parish: 40/15
- Baptisms: 7
- First Holy Communions: 16
- Confirmations: 16
- Marriages: 2
- Funerals: 14
- Children in our Catholic school system: 105
- Children in our Religious Education program: 45
- Children homeschooled: 0

St. Bridget Parish

- Households in the parish: 106
- New members/households in the parish: 14/4
- Baptisms: 1
- First Holy Communions: 1
- Confirmations: 0
- Marriages: 1
- Funerals: 1
- Children in our Catholic school system: 3
- Children in our Religious Education program: 11
- Children homeschooled: 0

Notre Dame Parish

- Households in the parish: 693
- New members/households in the parish: 57/24
- Baptisms: 35
- First Holy Communions: 32
- Confirmations: 28
- Marriages: 24
- Funerals: 42
- Children in our Catholic school system: 99
- Children in our Religious Education program: 79
- Children homeschooled: 22

Financial Reports

Here are simplified statements of our income and expenses for the completed fiscal year (July 2024-June 2025), as well as a budget for the current year (July 2025-June 2026). The parishes have other assets (endowments, funds designated for capital improvements, etc) not listed here. If you would like more details, check out a copy of the Annual Report available in the church office, contact a member of your parish Finance Council, or contact Kellie Anderson or Karin Hawkins in the parish office.

Holy Ghost Income and Expense Summary 2024-2025 Actual and 2025-2026 Budget

Income	Actual 2024/25	Budget 2025/26
Offerings	\$ 346,471.65	\$ 416,000.00
Plate	\$ 17,605.76	\$ 31,000.00
CCD	\$ 4,515.36	\$ 4,500.00
Diocesan Excess	\$ 6,936,250	\$ 3,000.00
Picnic and Socials	\$ 86,589.35	\$ 85,500.00
Endowment	\$ 12,401.55	\$ 14,000.00
 Total Regular Income	 \$ 474,519.92	 \$ 554,000.00
 Expenses	 Actual 2024/25	 Budget 2025/26
Salaries and benefits	\$ 157,247.55	\$ 170,350.00
Building Maintenance	\$ 26,058.32	\$ 31,000.00
Utilities	\$ 21,680.36	\$ 22,000.00
Office	\$ 6,393.91	\$ 5,820.00
Insurance	\$ 5,947.83	\$ 9,333.33
Liturgical Supplies.	\$ 20,408.59	\$ 18,100.00
MACS School Subsidy	\$ 212,154.80	\$ 234,422.28
Diocese of La Crosse	\$ 16,194.00	\$ 15,132.04
Catholic Life Magazine	\$ 1,513.00	\$ 1,100.00
 Total Regular Expenses	 \$ 467,598.36	 \$ 507,257.65

St. Bridget
Income and Expense Summary
2024-2025 Actual and 2025-2026 Budget

Income	Actual 2024/25	Budget 2025/26
Offerings	\$ 60,748.70	\$ 65,000.00
Plate	\$ 6,872.36	\$ 7,000.00
Diocesan Appeal		
Overages	\$ 3,400.00	\$ 0.00
Scrip	\$ 30,425.00	\$ 30,000.00
Picnic and Socials	\$ 16,626.65	\$ 15,750.00
Rent and Misc. Income	\$ 400.00	\$ 500.00
 Total Regular Income	 \$ 118,467.71	 \$ 118,250.00
 Expenses	 Actual 2024/25	 Budget 2025/26
Salaries and benefits	\$ 43,967.52	\$ 45,600.00
Building Maintenance	\$ 4,915.49	\$ 4,700.00
Utilities	\$ 8,610.64	\$ 10,000.00
Office	\$ 948.09	\$ 900.00
Insurance	\$ 2,597.50	\$ 4,000.00
MACS School Subsidy	\$ 4,395.75	\$ 4,439.71
Diocese of La Crosse	\$ 5,769.00	\$ 7,251.48
Catholic Life Magazine	\$ 401.25	\$ 350.00
 Total Regular Expenses	 \$ 71,605.24	 \$ 77,241.19

**Notre Dame
Income and Expense Summary
2024-2025 Actual and 2025-2026 Budget**

Income	Actual 2024/25	Budget 2025/26
Offerings	\$ 712,205.00	\$ 760,000.00
Plate	\$ 60,146.85	\$ 60,000.00
Faith Formation/OCIA Diocesan Appeal	\$ 38,142.28	\$ 24,000.00
Overages	\$ 12,307.77	\$ 15,000.00
Picnic and Socials	\$ 15,258.00	\$ 16,000.00
Endowment	\$ 158,584.78	\$ 159,000.00
Misc. Income	\$ 73,429.62	\$ 50,000.00
Total Regular Income	\$1,070,074.30	\$1,084,000.00
Expenses	Actual 2024/25	Budget 2025/26
Salaries and benefits	\$ 447,559.79	\$ 450,000.00
Building Maintenance	\$ 62,979.87	\$ 50,000.00
Utilities	\$ 54,411.81	\$ 55,000.00
Office	\$ 13,540.53	\$ 10,000.00
Insurance	\$ 15,807.00	\$ 32,000.00
MACS School Subsidy	\$ 404,228.87	\$ 404,486.00
Diocese of La Crosse	\$ 30,769.25	\$ 37,000.00
Faith Formation	\$ 59,158.47	\$ 46,000.00
Catholic Life Magazine	\$ 1,158.75	\$ 1,500.00
Total Regular Expenses	\$1,089,614.34	\$1,085,986.00