



IHM 2021

Year In Review

Overcoming the Past...

Forward Facing...

Confident in Christ



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Dear Friends in Christ,

It is an understatement to say that we have been challenged over the last few years individually, as families and as a parish community. Yet through it all I have been reminded constantly that, in difficulty, “God guides and provides”, for we are indeed blessed with men and women of faith who have committed time, talent and treasure to the needs of each other, on behalf of our Church community and beyond. Together we have seen opportunities, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, have grown in many ways.

I want to take a moment to summarize how IHM has attempted to respond to and anticipate the needs of its communities in 2021 in keeping with its charge to be a light in the darkness. I will touch on specific initiatives and ministries while discussing others in greater depth in future reports.

Peace,

Father Mike

“God guides and provides”

Planning and Outreach

Pastoral Council:

Recognizing the need for more input as to specific spiritual and material needs, the Pastoral Council has been reconstituted and tasked with creating a structural framework that allows us to be responsive to those needs. We have done an assessment on how best to improve our efforts in terms of outbound communication, hospitality, and in-house information flow. Tangible initial results from these efforts can be seen in a more-graphic Sunday Bulletin, an enhanced digital footprint and social media presence.



Vine and Branches:

As part of a broader Archdiocesan initiative, Vine and Branches is an effort to reengage parishioners post-COVID through a personalized invitation and welcome back to their "Spiritual Home". This effort, which began in October 2021 has seen group-specific blessings offered at Masses, All Saints / All Souls Outreach for parish families who experienced losses during the year, and a special All Hallows Outreach for children of the parish.

Charity



Food Pantry:

IHM Parishioners and other residents of Scotch Plains / Fanwood, and beyond, have responded generously to needs which have increased dramatically in the current environment. Having once served 70+ families per month, Pantry volunteers now put together packages for some 280 families per month at last count with efforts supplemented by the support of local governments and businesses. Above and beyond, God blessed the Pantry Food Garden with an abundant harvest in 2021, resulting in over 300 lbs of garden fresh vegetables.



Christmas Giving Tree:

Response to Giving Tree "Angel" requests resulted in some 800 gifts distributed to 204 families through Plainfield Action Services as well as 137 hooded sweatshirts to people in half-way houses recovering from drug or mental challenges.

Faith

In 2021 efforts to reconnect with the community grow together in faith came in many varieties delivered in many different ways.

Women's Prayer Group: The Women's Prayer Group seeks out broader themes allowing opportunities to learn more about Scripture, spiritual role models and Christian values. Offering "connection through discussion", last year discussion topics included "Gifts of the Magi", "Prayer as Pilgrimage" and "St. Joseph the Silent Partner".

Men's Prayer Group: A monthly gathering of men to read and discuss scripture and its applicability to day-to-day life. Focusing on the reading of the upcoming Sunday and discerning ways to live out the Gospel.

Knights of Columbus: Father Nelligan Chapter 5370 is a service organization encompassing men from both IHM and St Bartholomew Parishes, providing an outlet allowing them to constructively offer witness to their faith at home and outside of it. Service initiatives have included Seminarian support, Right to Life and Coats for Kids.

Spiritual Discussions: Group discussions on the great spiritual writers St. Theresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, and Henri Nouwen helped participants grow in faith and spirituality.



Alpha: Alpha is an interfaith effort focused on small group discussion of key life issues and how faith can be applied to them. Through video presentation and discussion many experienced a renewed or deepened relationship with our Lord and discovered ways in which they can live that relationship in their daily lives.

Centering Prayer: A group of men and women meeting weekly (via Zoom in 2021) employing a contemplative variety of prayer so as to allow the Holy Spirit to respond in changing hearts and minds.

Rosary Altar Society: Having undertaken a number of activities early in 2021 via Zoom, including Stations of the Cross and a mini-Retreat, the Society resumed meeting in person during the last quarter of the year. Activities included an "Afternoon in France" marked by a movie documenting the life of St. Theresa, and a Christmas Celebration which saw \$1,300 raised for the Missionaries of Charity.

Youth Ministry: Great things happened within our Youth Ministry program here at IHM. Our adult CAST members and Clergy offer great support. We had a very busy fall with activities almost every weekend. Our Peer Leadership Team this year is outstanding. They prepare activities ahead of each event and execute beautifully. They are mature and act as excellent role models for the other teens. We hosted two very successful Jr Youth Ministry service nights for our 8th grade students packing Boxes of Hope for impoverished youth abroad and hand made hats for local kids in foster care here in Union County. As part of our new college youth ministry program we also included were 2 College care package nights for our recent youth ministry alum.



Faith Formation:

IHM recognizes the absolute necessity of putting parents at the center of their children's faith formation, and remains committed to developing ways to support families and provide opportunities to grow in faith together. The Alpha program cited above was initiated in 2021 as one vehicle for adult faith formation; IHM continues to explore means by which it might reach both adults and children at points of "first contact" – be they baptisms, marriage preparation or confirmation.

2021 saw 38 families celebrated First Communion at IHM, and 46 families saw their ninth grade children receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. We continue to pivot between in-person and Zoom instruction as COVID waxes and wanes; in 2022 we will celebrate with 39 families who are participating in Communion preparation and we expect 59 families to see their ninth-graders confirmed.

Summer Academy 2021 was modified to accommodate restrictions dictated by COVID – the impact on the 8th Grade Discipleship Program was mitigated by the involvement of dedicated parent leaders providing supervision and encouragement. Similar modifications were made to our "Families in Faith" program - originally designed to be a continuation of Summer Academy – with the addition



"One word repeatedly comes to mind throughout this report: Community, for that is what we are – a community in Christ charged with bringing the Good News beyond itself to the broader community (and, actually, to the ends of the Earth)"

Financial

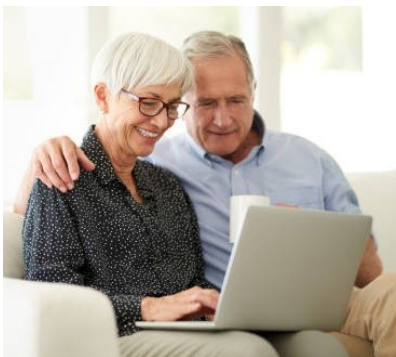
Up until now I have highlighted the ways in which IHM has served as both refuge and resource for our own parishioners, and as a valued participant in life of the communities we serve. But there is no denying that Covid has taken its toll on all religious institutions, and IHM is no exception.

Mass attendance has been down during this period, and while we have recently seen an increase in attendance, the result has been a reduction in collections and other revenues resulting in operating deficits in 2021 of \$68,129 and \$210,951 in 2020. Thankfully, we have had reserves to absorb these losses, however, these reserves have now been significantly depleted by the cumulative reduction in revenues. We also reduced operating expenses and deferred planned maintenance and upgrades of our facilities, to the extent possible to compensate for the reduction in collections and other revenues.

Overall, annualized revenues are down 20% compared to years prior to Covid. In addition to our Church Administration, we also collected and expended \$71,155 (2020) and \$41,864 (2021) in connection with the Food Bank and our society accounts; and collected \$175,355 and expended \$160,156 in connection with our multi year Capital Campaign. The residual balances in these accounts are generally not available for Church administration.

Accordingly, I have tasked the Pastoral and Finance Councils to assess our current financial condition to enable us to address the impact of reduced revenues as well as determining the resources needed to restore our financial position, maintain, and upgrade our Church and other facilities and enable us to contribute materially and spiritually to the communities we serve. I will report back on the outcome of the Councils' assessment and our planned actions to restore our financial health.

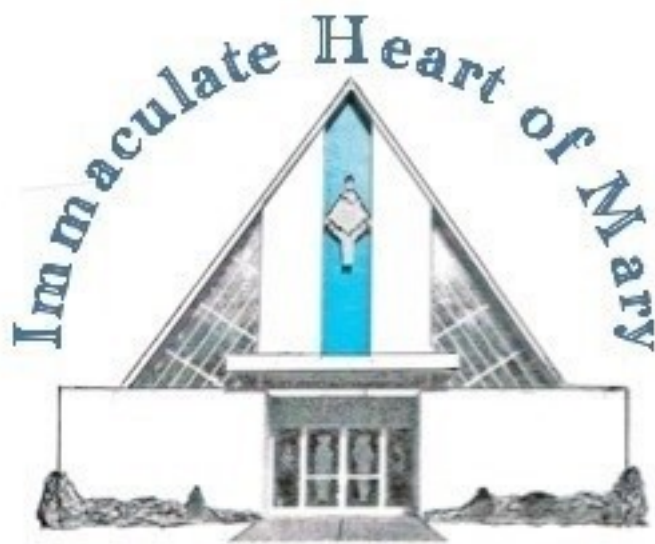
Digital and Technology



We can be proud of the milestones we have achieved in the past two years with regards to technology. The ability to livestream our daily Masses (Monday through Saturday at 8:30AM and Sundays at 10AM) has been a lifeline to so many, not only in our parish but WORLD-WIDE! And we're making strides every day with our website and social media capabilities. Nearly every aspect of parish life has changed for the better through technology, from Zoom meetings for our prayer groups and Alpha groups, to social media appeals for our food pantry, even our weekly bulletin has undergone a facelift with easier access to important information for our parishioners.

Financial

Revenues	2020	2021
Weekly Collections	545,537	519,525
Christmas Collection	76,422	57,525
Easter Collection	49,113	44,200
Interest Income	12,360	2,083
Gifts, Donations & Candles	4,746	10,040
Religious Education	31,982	49,163
Rosary Altar, Holy Name, CYO	52,855	3,660
Other Income	32,681	28,391
Restricted Donations (includes food pantry)	21,716	110,624
Fundraising (Events, bricks)	600	2,212
TOTAL ORDINARY REVENUES	828,012	827,423
Capital Campaign Revenues	285,493	175,355
	1,113,505	1,002,778
Expenses	2020	2021
Salaries & Benefits	486,181	444,375
Religious Education Supplies	47,258	37,772
Rectory Provisions	12,383	7,138
Contracted Services	34,744	35,517
Insurance	24,131	27,907
Utilities	88,550	80,764
Supplies & Materials	34,047	29,578
Repairs & Maintenance	76,411	62,730
Diocesan Assessment	142,333	114,024
Assistance & Donations	11,084	44,356
Parish Events	18,544	2,062
Rosary Altar, Holy Name, CYO	63,117	8,590
Fundraising	180	739
TOTAL ORDINARY EXPENSES	1,038,963	895,552
ORDINARY REVENUE OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES	(210,951)	(68,129)
Capital Campaign Expenses	1,757,966	160,156
	2,796,929	1,055,708
REVENUE OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES	(1,683,424)	(52,930)



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