

It's hard to believe that I'm beginning my seventh year as pastor at STA. As I look over the past annual reports it's amazing how much has been accomplished in our parish, none of which would have been possible without the help, support and the generosity of our parishioners.

***Where we are.....***

This annual report will reflect all we have done across a broad spectrum of our parish life this past year. The graphs, figures, reports and pictures demonstrate the accomplishments we should all be proud of. We have significantly improved not only the conditions of the buildings and grounds which Peter V. our Business Manager highlights in this report, but we are also strengthening our pastoral and spiritual outreach.

Pastorally speaking, our parish is very much alive and growing in great part with the support of 350 volunteers in over 36 different ministries. We average approximately 1500 persons at the six weekend Masses. Our Lenten Bible study registered over 70 participants and our Lenten Parish Mission was led by former seminarians who interned in our parish and who are now priests. Our Religious Education Program, which is one of the largest in the Archdiocese, serves almost 1000 students. We confirmed 117 high school students and 91 children received First Holy Communion. Seven young adults were brought into the church during the Easter Vigil. Our St. Vincent DePaul Society continues to distribute food to needy families and the Christmas Giving tree provided hundreds of presents to families. In order to stay current and expand our outreach, we are continuing to develop our website ([stthomasaquinas.com](http://stthomasaquinas.com)) and soon hope to have a parish app.

As you will see in this report we have strengthened our financial revenue. For the third year in a row we've exceeded our Catholic Appeal Goal by pledging over \$58,000, to the point that our parish receives rebates back from the Archdiocese. Last year's Grand Annual Collection (\$130,156) was the highest on record and through our annual Stewardship Renewal Initiative we've increased the weekly collection revenue significantly. All this has been accomplished not by me, but because we are a Christian Community working together, caring for and supporting each other, and sharing the gifts God's given us. I cannot thank you enough.

***Where we're headed.....***

In June our parish was blessed with the assignment of a **newly ordained priest, Fr. Jason Giombetti**. During the summer his "Summer Cocktails and Catholic Catechism" socials in the rectory were very well attended and many had the opportunity to ask questions freely in order to better understand their faith. We can't share our faith if we don't understand it.

There is no doubt that our parish is dynamic and growing. While a lot of emphasis has, over the past few years, been placed on physical repairs and upgrades, it's **now time to focus on evangelization**. The parish community must help people better appreciate the Lord's love for them, help them to better understand their faith, and to have a desire to share with others as we continue to find ways to strengthen and grow our parish.

This is a big job and I recognize that the priests of the parish can't accomplish this alone if it's going to be done well. The Archdiocese of Boston initiated a **Disciples in Mission** Program, ([disciplesinmission.com](http://disciplesinmission.com)), five years ago to help parishes in this effort. The Mission is asking every parish to recognize their call, their responsibility and to strengthen and share our faith

more fervently. Our Parish Pastoral Council has already begun to identify our priorities and strategies for the future. A significant component of Disciples in Mission is to capitalize or draw upon the faith, strengths and talents of the laity to assist the pastor in this mission. This partnership is critical to the continued growth of our parish. To that end I have identified two NEW staff positions which will provide leadership in this area.

The **Full time Pastoral Associate** will be responsible to coordinate our efforts, support the present ministries in our parish, develop new pastoral programs and initiatives, and walk in faith with our parishioners to support and encourage them along this journey. This person will be able to give the time, support and encouragement to many individuals and groups that support our parish mission.

The **Full time Campus and Parish Youth Minister** will further develop and support our present campus ministry to the students and faculty at Bridgewater State University AND develop a youth ministry program for our parish middle and high school students. This focus will be to engage the students in social, community service, and faith enrichment activities. The future of our church is helping students not only better understand their faith and the Church, but to become part of a Christian community that is living the Gospel. We are very fortunate that funding for this position will be shared by the Archdiocese of Boston Campus Ministry.

Although these positions have been needed for some time it's only been within the past year that we, thanks to your financial support, are in a position to fund them.

Having these two additional staff members will not only strengthen our ability to support and develop ongoing ministries, but enable Fr. G. and I to be much more accessible and responsive to the specific or immediate pastoral care and needs of the parishioners and the community at large.

I am proud of what we have accomplished, and excited about the future as we continue to grow our parish community and focus on evangelizing the word of our Lord.

My best to you and your families and thank you for all you do.