

Our Sunday Visitor

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Palm Coast, FL

How do you engage people in the Faith and the life of your church after a decade of instability? This challenge was handed to Fr. Jason Trull when he became pastor at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Palm Coast, FL.

“My first weekend here at the church, I noticed the deflation in our community,” Fr. Trull said. In a ten year stretch, the church had seen nearly 20 priests come and go. The instability at the pastoral position caused a decrease of engagement and commitment from parishioners, a lack of vision for the future, and an overall sense of uncertainty in the community. Fr. Trull mentioned his main priority: To bring healing.



“This parish needed a positive transition, a vision for the future that would provide a sense of direction and meaning,” he said. Fr. Trull listed several things he wanted for the future of the parish. One was to continue to grow the St. Elizabeth Catholic School especially in a community with highly competitive public schooling and athletics. Another was to build more meeting space for ministries and activities at the church in hopes that the renovation would inspire people to be involved regularly. Father also expressed his desire to bring sisters back on-campus and provide lodging and support for them.

A hefty vision, yes. However, with the assistance of Our Sunday Visitor, Fr. Trull and his staff worked to plan and develop a bright future for the parish and its community.

OSV's Increased Offertory Program drives vision

In nearly 18 months, Fr. Trull formed a pastoral team committed to creating a plan for better communication and ways to engage the parish after ten long years of instability. Not only was the involvement in parish ministries down, but the finances had taken a hit as well. In 2014, the parish experienced a net loss in budgeted operating income of over \$27,000. It was a concern that parish leadership needed to confront. This proposed a more difficult challenge for Fr. Trull, one in which he admittedly dislikes the thought of asking for money.

“Asking people to faithfully increase their giving is difficult and is just not who I am,” he said. “So, the staff and I decided to look for help on this one. We needed someone to provide us the proper tools - the right messaging to do this successfully.” After contacting several organizations, Father said Our Sunday Visitor's (OSV) Increased Offertory Program stood out in addressing their unique situation.

“OSV's approach wasn't a ‘show me the money’ type of program,” he said with a smile. “Instead it focused on being good stewards. It allowed us to be transparent about what we do at the church, in the community, and how we want to help build the kingdom of God.”



OSV's expert consultants advised Father and his council to create a theme for the program that encouraged giving from the heart to support the church's vision for the future. Based on Matthew 6:21 “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,” they decided to name the program, ***Your Gift Today is Our Treasure for Tomorrow.*** Next, OSV developed a plan and supplied materials for Lay Witness speakers to share heartfelt experiences of being part a vital part of the parish's community and future growth.

As part of the program's Commitment Sunday process, parishioners were encouraged to complete a commitment card with their new increased contributions. Commitments of prayer were of expressed importance to Fr. Trull for those who could not make an increase to their gifts.

Our Sunday Visitor also helped the parish set up Online Giving, OSV's mobile-friendly, electronic giving solution.

Within days, Fr. Trull saw a continuously growing amount of parishioners registering for Online Giving. They were able to schedule weekly recurring gifts with their increased giving amount.

“From Online Giving to the messaging of the program, I think the process was very successful,” Fr. Trull said. “OSV’s program had that balance between increasing the offertory and reaching the hearts of our people. I thought it was all very well managed.”

Parishioners Commit to Continued Generosity

As the Increased Offertory Program came to a conclusion, Our Sunday Visitor supplied the parish with a detailed Summary Report analyzing the results. Fr. Trull and the staff were pleased to see a 49% increase over previous donations for a committed total of over \$300,000. According to Fr. Trull, the results confirmed their commitment as a community and their desire to continue toward the vision.

“I’m very pleased and grateful to see the support we got from the people in our church,” he said. Noting that his experience with OSV had been a pleasant one, he added, “You know, we switched to OSV as our offering envelope provider after our great experience. I think OSV has done a tremendous job in making our program simple and putting the pieces together to make it affordable.”

Fr. Trull and the parish business manager have agreed to renew OSV’s Increased Offertory Program each year as an annual effort to continue to move the church forward and strive toward their overall vision for the future.

If you’re interested in learning how your parish can achieve these results with OSV’s program, or you would like to learn more about Online Giving, offering envelopes, or any other offertory solutions, call (800) 348-2886 ext. 2539 today!