When I told someone that I was going to be talking after
communion, they said: “Oh, those talks are never good!” I hope that
won’t be your only reaction.

First of all I want to thank you for your faithfulness and your
generosity. For the past six years, I have been constantly impressed
with your goodness. Whether it was a narthex full of gifts for the Angel
tree each year, to contributions for the property adjacent to the
Church, money to help get the current Food Pantry started, or your
generosity in the weekly collection... no one could ask for more. Your
support last summer and your ongoing care for me personally have
been both humbling and a reason for me to be proud of serving you as
a parish. But I need to come to you again...we have a several problems
that I need to ask you to help me fix.
Every year, when it is time to shape the budget; our Business Manager Lee Mecca does an incredible job. With only about 35% of the parish telling us what they intend to give in the upcoming year, she creates a budget. We have been very fortunate in the past few years. She and the Finance Council somehow “guessed” correctly. Imagine if you tried to create your household budget, and you had no idea of your income? It’s a total guess in the dark. So, the first area I need your help on is this: when we budget, we need you to let us know your anticipated giving pattern.

The second area follows: At the end of July, we ran a $2,500 deficit in our General Fund (the fund that pays the bills), in August the shortfall was up to $10,000, and by the end of September, as we incurred ongoing expenses... our general fund is lower than expenses by approximately $30,000 year to date. $30,000! In the first two months, I wasn’t too concerned, families not using Faith Direct may
have been away for vacation, a drop in income could be expected in the summer months, but now we are too far behind to be comfortable.

When folks suggest that we curtail expenditures, you need to know that our budget does not have any “fat” in it..., there aren’t many places to cut. The majority of our expenditures come from Diocesan taxes (about which we can do nothing!), salaries (we have one of the smallest staffs I know of!), maintenance and utilities. As you know as a homeowner, most of those expenditures are nonnegotiable.

Did you know that we pay 18% of every dollar to the Diocese in tax? Add to that a requirement of $55,000 for Diocesan schools ... (approximately $1,000 per week!) and you have almost one third of every dollar going to the Diocese! Just as, maybe even more concerning are a number of maintenance issues that we must address:

- We need to replace one of the largest HVAC units we have in the building. The cost to repair it because of its age is the same as it is to replace it -- $19,400. The mate to this unit is
also in disrepair, but is limping along and before long, we will need to replace it…. Another $20,000!

- By necessity, we are in the process of upgrading our smoke detection system. The one we have is 17 years old with a portion of it even older, and the sensors are starting to fail. Our children are at risk if there is a fire. That price tag is $12,500.

- One of the two front doors has been repaired numerous times, it needs to be replaced. We are waiting on estimates…. But we understand that replacement could be close to $10,000!

- The safety committee has made us aware of the need for commercial grade cameras to monitor and record activities in the hallways, and create a means for very fast communication between safety team members. That expense …around $13,000.
The septic tank behind the Church building by the
columbarium is still being worked on. Estimated cost to
complete the repair – approximately $13,000, maybe more.
That’s just to prevent another disaster like the one that
occurred on Easter Sunday two years ago.

I’m afraid that we are looking at significant unexpected expenses
that were certainly not in the budget for this year, yet they are very
important and must be addressed.

For the short term, there is only one action that I can see, and
that’s to start taking up a second collection. It is not the best solution,
(an increase in giving across the board is…) neither of us like doing it,
but it gets us out of the short term deficit we seem to be in. We need
to raise about $65 to $75,000 just to cover maintenance expenses. Any
returns that we get from the Living Our Mission campaign will help us
reach long term goals.
The best answer comes from asking a much more difficult question: Have you thought about increasing your offertory gift? That question is vitally important. Each family will answer that question differently, but we all need to think about it. How can we increase our regular Sunday giving?

In conclusion….we really are at a serious crossroad. These are difficult times in the Church. I’m like you, I’m not just unhappy with how the abuse crisis has been handled, I’m angry just like many I’ve talked to are. Choosing to withhold your contributions on the parish level only hurts the place that we are fed as a community. Slowly we could choke ourselves, or... like I’ve experienced you doing for the past 6 years, you will respond... as you can.... from very generous hearts.

Thank you for your attention and your time.