



- ♦ **How ready are we for the Final Audit?**
- ♦ **Parish outreach**
- ♦ **Update on outreach to Uganda**

Reflecting on this week's Gospel of the last Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46, Patricia Sanchez writes:

Audit—a dreaded idea by most accounts, this five-letter word packs enough emotional and psychological power to cause even the most stalwart of shoulders to sag. The very prospect of someone else scrutinizing our financial records to assess whether or not we have disbursed our funds and made just and honest use of our assets has very little appeal. However, this is precisely the prospect on which today's gospel hinges. Appealing or not, the Matthean Jesus instructs us that, upon his return in glory, each of us will be called to render an account of ourselves and how well or poorly we have made use of our material blessings; in other words, we shall be faced with life's ultimate audit....

Keep in mind the gospel parable for last Sunday; it should prove to be a helpful frame of reference for appreciating the challenge of this week's gospel. Recall that each of three servants were featured as having to account for the use he made of the material possessions allotted him by his master. Each had received what he had as a gift but each was also responsible for making the best use of that gift for his master. Like those servants, each of us has been blessed by God with a share of this world's goods. So also, each of us has been challenged to make the best use of these goods by furthering the interests of our master, i.e., by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless, etc. such are the criteria which will determine how well we will fare at our ultimate audit before our returned, risen and glorious King.

(Used with permission *The Word We Celebrate: Commentary on the Sunday Lectionary Years A, B, C*, by Patricia Sanchez, Sheed & Ward publisher 9-1-89.)

Our ultimate audit as a nation, as a church and individually

- ♦ **As a Nation.** Today's Gospel states: "*When the Son of Man comes ... all the nations of the world will be*

assembled before him." So it would seem that today's Gospel not only applies to us individually but also to us as a nation and as a church—that seems fair. It seems fair that highly developed nations would want to help underdeveloped nations. Needless to say, I do realize that this is not an easy thing to work out on a practical level since there is often a lot of corruption in the leadership of poor countries. Anyway, the basic point here is that nations will be judged on Judgment Day.

- ♦ **As a Church/Parish.** Since my days as a pastor in the Church of Our Saviour in Cocoa Beach, I have firmly believed that parishes our size should include in their budgets a line-item for Outreach to the needy at home and abroad. On a practical level, this has meant setting aside \$100,000 *Tithe* money for outreach. Over the years, we have used this money to help ministries that serve the poor at home and abroad, e.g., Habitat for Humanity, Community of Hope, Community of Hope in Apopka which ministers to documented and undocumented persons, CRS Food Packing Event, and outreach to Uganda. While I believe that "charity should begin at home," I also believe that "charity should not stay at home."

Outreach Locally—our own wonderful Social Concerns Office

This office and its many volunteers are headed up by Jerry & Olga Kelly. I am very grateful for their leadership role in this local outreach. The following is a report from January 2020 to November 17, 2020.

Social Concerns Report January 2020-November 2020

Total donations received to date: \$224,303

Donations received from Thrift Shop \$ 62,000
(Store has been closed since March following the fire.)

Miscellaneous donations \$162,303

Social Concerns and Food Pantry helps 25-40 families per day with food and financial assistance for rent/shelter, electric, water, gas bills, and medications.

This year, Social Concerns helped 7,334 people (3,238 families, 49 of whom are parishioners). Financially, Social Concerns gave out \$194,725.51, excluding food drive and food donations.

FPL assistance this year: \$59,578

We serve to meet the needs of our Parish members as well as those in our local community. We operate strictly by donations. Due to the generosity of donations, we are able to provide this assistance.

Some highlights from this year

Even with Covid-19, Social Concerns was only closed for one week and continued with food assistance. It opened for full services on August 1, as authorized by the Diocese.

This year, almost 100 clients will receive Thanksgiving baskets with gift cards to buy the turkey.

There are approximately **75 volunteers** (none paid) working in Social Concerns. Hours are 9:00–11:00am, Monday to Friday.

Outreach to Uganda

As most of you know, about 18 months ago we started to join Blessed Trinity Parish in Ocala in their outreach to the Church in Uganda. The pastor, Fr. Sheedy, who turned 80 last Sunday, has been going to Uganda for 15 years. They have one parish (Blessed Trinity) which has *30 sub-parishes*.

In June 2019, I went to Uganda with about 30 people—six of whom were Ascension parishioners. We were all set to go again this past summer when Covid-19 hit. Like all things connected with Covid-19, I do not know if I will travel to Uganda next summer.

Since that visit, we have been in the process of helping two parishes—more accurately, one sub-parish and one newly formed parish.



Ascension sub-parish

Ascension is one of 30 sub-parishes which Blessed Trinity Parish Ocala is helping out. We have two projects in that sub-parish.

- ◆ We are in the process of building a school. Currently, there are three separate buildings: one with 3 classrooms, (see above) another with 4 classrooms and a third one with 2 classrooms. As you might guess, all schools in Uganda have been closed during this Covid-19 time, but they hope to re-open in the new year.

This school was almost totally funded by \$5,000 gifts from our Ascension parishioners.

- ◆ ***Our Lady of the Angels Orphanage.*** Very close to the Ascension sub-parish is a small orphanage with about 30 children, ages 1-17. Hopefully, children from the orphanage will be able to attend Ascension School when it opens. This past year, we funded a multi-purpose building for the orphanage.



Our Lady of Mercy Orphanage multipurpose hall is intended for:

1. Dining hall for the children
2. Prayer and Sunday Service with a catechist, seminarian or a priest, when available
3. Study and homework
4. Assembly and conference
5. Recreation and entertainment
6. Visitors to meet children
7. Place for the children to spend time with one another doing activities
8. Shelter from rain during the rainy season and keeping busy with work

Outreach to St. Peter and Paul Parish

When I was in Uganda in the summer of 2019, my driver from a sub-parish was Fr. Henry, a young priest. A day or two before I left, Fr. Henry got a letter from his bishop appointing him to be the pastor of St. Peter and Paul. Fr. Henry asked if we could help him. I said yes and would see what I could do. Shortly after I returned and told that story in our bulletin with a photo of Fr. Henry and me, I received a **\$30,000 donation** from an Ascension parishioner who wanted to help the young priest get started. The \$30,000 was used in three ways.

- ◆ Enabled Fr. Henry to renovate a very dilapidated rectory. Now he and his newly ordained Associate Priest, Fr. Joseph, live in this nice home..... \$14,000





Inside view
of the living
room

Fr. Henry
(blue shirt)
and
Fr. Joseph



- ♦ Funded the creation of a water fountain, the main source of clean water for locals \$9,000

- ♦ Furnished the interior of the Church.

Exterior of
St. Peter and Paul
Church



Interior of
Church

St. Peter and Paul Parish School

With two donations of \$10,000 and more \$5,000 donations, and with some help from the Parish Tithe, we helped Fr. Henry build Part One of his school which will serve children from the surrounding areas. Part One has 3 classrooms, each holding 40 students (see photos below). They are now planning the construction of Part Two of the school. As the photos show below, the local parishioners helped with the project. This school is also funded with a combination of gifts from the parishioners and by parish tithe.



Consider a donation to our outreach at home and abroad

This Sunday's Gospel is indeed a sober reminder that each of us will one day account for the way we did or did not share our resources to give a leg up to those in need. I said above that "while charity may begin at home, it should not stay at home." It is a good thing to support local charities and outreach *ministries but also wonderful to support ministries that have little or no access to funding*. I have given \$1,000 to the Social Concerns Challenge and intend to give a substantial gift this Christmas to our outreach in Uganda. I know where the gift is going and I know helping the construction of a school or church will be a gift that will last for a very long time. For those of you who are my age and older and have some means, why not consider giving a generous donation *now*. You can see from the photos, if not in person, the way your donation is making a wonderful difference to a community with little or no access to outside funding.

Have a blessed week,

Le Saran

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