

SCREEN: blank red background

ME: For sports fans in our area,
it's been an exciting Spring.

The Caps and Wizards were both
in the playoffs and everybody
was hoping this could be *the year*.
But sadly, it was not to be.

SCREEN: Go Nats!

So now we turn to baseball: Go Nats!

They currently lead the NL East.

Here's some other baseball news

you might have heard:

the Nationals have agreed to pay

Bryce Harper, their star player,

\$21 million for one year!

One year....\$21 million!

Think of it: that would pay for our
parish expansion plan 7x over!

Does *anybody* have Bryce's phone
number?!?

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WE: It's risky bringing up money in church,
isn't it?

It makes some folks nervous....

‘Uh oh, Father’s winding up for the pitch!’

Some of you get turned off.....

‘He’s talking about money again!’

And a few people get angry hearing
about money.

Trust me, I know this is all swirling
out there and that’s okay.

And if you’re a visitor or guest,

you can sit back and relax,

this message is *NOT* directed at you.

So why talk about money in here?

Two reasons.

FIRST: If a church is going to connect

with people it has to acknowledge

what's going on in their lives.

And I know that money is on everyone's

mind.

It has to be because it's in the news

all the time---the economy, healthcare,

jobs, retirement plans, budget talks,

immigration debates---it's all about money:

who has it, who needs it,

how to spread it around evenly.

Money makes the world go round...

for better or for worse.

And the SECOND reason is if this is

what's going on in the world and in your life,

it can't help but impact your faith.

SCREEN: Living Stones main screen

And that's why our current message series

titled "Living Stones" is so important.

Just like this graphic shows,

when we speak of 'living stones'

we are referring to the members of the
Church---you and me.

The bible teaches us that the only way
for the Church to grow is with every
single disciple being a living stone.

Disciples do this by giving of their time,
talent and their treasure.

Treasure refers to the financial resources
you and I have been given by God.

Let's turn to today's readings to
see what is possible when members give.

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GOD: Since Easter we've been hearing
how the Apostles preached that Jesus
rose from the dead and is the Son of God.

They were so successful that thousands of people were joining the Church which kept growing and growing.

How did the Church back then sustain itself?

How were they able to take care of everybody and make sure their leaders could keep making disciples?

First, they had the Holy Spirit.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit the Apostles
could go out and preach the Word.

Spiritually they were set;
had what they needed.

But they had something else,
just as essential.

If you go the Acts of the Apostles,

chapter two you read this:

SCREEN: All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need....

And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

-Acts 2

So each member knew, *'this thing called*

Church doesn't happen without me.'

Knew, *'For me to be a living stone and*

help build the Church I have to

give generously.'

And because of this amazing financial

support, Philip and the Apostles

were able to reach out beyond

Jerusalem to other people in other lands.

Today we heard they traveled to Samaria

and the people there joined the Church.

None of this could have happened
without generous givers.

Without it, we wouldn't be here now!

YOU: God needs you to be a living stone
so His Church can keep growing today.

And the part of the Church God wants you
to help grow is St. Pius X Church.

SCREEN: To form disciples who joyfully
live out the mission of Jesus Christ in
Bowie. *-SPX Church vision statement*

As a parish we have a vision of what is possible and here it is:

to form disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ in Bowie.

Other than the Bowie part, this is the exact same vision the Apostles had.

And just like for Philip and the Apostles, for St. Pius to succeed and for this vision

to come to fulfillment, we need our
members to give.

Without it, won't happen.

But with you, this vision becomes a reality
and we can keep making disciples.

Let me talk for a minute about the
reality of giving at St. Pius.

When I arrived nine years ago I learned

that only about 1/3 of our households
were dedicated givers. Just a third.

A dedicated giver is someone who gives on
average \$20 a week or more to St. Pius.

One third were carrying the whole parish.

When I shared that statistic back then,
it shocked a lot of people.

Folks said, "*Father, we had no idea so few*

people were giving.”

Some of you heard me and responded.

I can happily report that now about 50%
of you are giving in a dedicated way.

Which is great and higher than the
national average for Catholics.

But think about what I’m saying:

this still means that half of our members

are not giving in any dedicated way if at all.

Now as pastor, I have to be honest,

I struggle to wrap my head around this with

all that St. Pius X Church does.

It would be easy for you and I to dwell

on this negative number.

But I'd rather celebrate all that our

giving members make possible.

Because our members give we can provide programs to make a difference in the lives of the hundreds of children who participate in babysitting, SLAM, Kids Ministry, and our Middle School and High School Ministries.

Because our members give we can provide for all our liturgical ministries to make sure our worship is inviting, engaging, and

uplifting.

Giving enables us to form small groups

for adults, to share the faith with those

becoming Catholic and those already

Catholic through bible study and

our parish retreat program.

Because our members give we can

support S.O.M.E. a soup kitchen in DC

and Assumption Outreach in Anacostia,
and our Sharing Pantry, our SVDP Society,
our Honduras Mission, Warm Nights,
the Gabriel Network and the
Bowie Interfaith Food Pantry.

With giving we can go beyond these walls
to reach out and welcome back Bowie Bob
and Bowie Barb--all the de-churched and

unchurched in our neighborhoods.

And I haven't even mentioned all the

other things we can easily take for granted

like lighting, air conditioning, candles,

hosts, wine, maintenance and grounds.

We provide all of this from your giving.

And we do all this with only 50% of our

members committed to generous giving.

*Imagine what we could do if everyone
committed to give generously?*

How many more families and children
could we hand on the faith to?

How many more adults could we engage?

How many more of the hungry and poor
could we serve?

How many more Bowie Bobs & Barbs

could we welcome?

Look around; there is room in our pews
for those not yet here.

This is what it means to be a living stone
and embrace the vision of the Church!

In the Gospel reading today Jesus was
giving final instructions to his followers

before his death.

And 5 times he used the word love.

*If you love me you will keep my
commandments.*

What did he say is the greatest
commandment?

Love God and love your neighbor.

So to be a living stone means you give

as an act of love.

It's how you can help build the Kingdom
and enable your parish to share Christ's
message of love with all who need
to hear it.

It's all for love.

Jesus said that when you love as he loves,
he remains with you always.

His promise of the Holy Spirit helps you
every single day to see your life
as God sees it.

And when you are a generous giver,
you shift the focus of life off of yourself and
put it where it should be...
on God and others.

SCREEN: Living Stones main screen

For the next few weeks, culminating on

Pentecost (which is June 3/4),

we will be preaching about how you and I

can become the 'living stones'

Christ calls us to be.

On Pentecost we will have our

annual offertory pledge renewal.

Every year in the Spring we ask our

members to pledge their financial support
to the parish.

Now even though we are considering that
\$3m expansion plan for our facilities,
*(which I'm hoping Bryce Harper will pay
for!)* the Pentecost renewal is entirely
about your regular parish support.

This week you will receive a letter in

the mail asking you to renew your support
for the coming year.

With the letter you will receive a
pledge card to fill out and bring with you
to Mass on Pentecost, two weeks from now
and also the information contained on
this takeaway (hold up).

It can help you determine what your giving

should look like.

Be sure to get one as you leave today.

They are at the doors of the church.

WE: From today's scriptures we see that

God has a powerful vision for His Church.

It's the vision he has for our parish.

Please pray about how you can support

us in making disciples in Bowie.

Together, let's make the vision of Christ's
Kingdom a reality for St. Pius X Church.

Together let us be living stones.