

Standing Order Appeal – November 2021



Dear Parishioners

In normal times, the Parish finance council would make a Standing Order appeal twice a year.

However, as you are all aware we are not living in normal times and due to Covid, our last appeal was in February 2020.

We did not make an appeal in the second half of 2020, nor in the first semester of 2021 due to the Covid-19 situation and given the circumstances in which parishioners were living with regard to insecurity in their working lives, difficulties in travelling to see their loved ones and living under the restrictions that did not allow us to meet up with friends and work colleagues.

And so our appeal this year is a little different than in previous times.

We have been very fortunate that our celebration of the Liturgy has continued during the pandemic initially only through the medium of streaming using our Facebook account and now again in a more traditional way. Also, during this time we have managed to celebrate First Communion and Confirmation for so many of the young parishioners of our parish albeit, with all the frills of social distancing, hand washing, face masking etc. And, our annual Family Christmas Carol Concert managed to stream its way into your homes. In addition we have had several baptisms and weddings and alas, also a few funerals. On the charity front we have also continued to support the many charities that needed assistance and we are delighted to see the Angel Tree appeal bounce back to life this year.

And so just a little background to our financial situation

As you can see, we are very fortunate, in our parish, to have a beautiful church, magnificent grounds, a parish centre and two wonderful Franciscan priests, Fr. Michael and Fr. Pat who look after all our pastoral needs.

As you can imagine in a parish of our size and with the facilities that we enjoy, there are substantial costs in running the parish.

We have 2 part-time secretaries, which between them provide administrative support to our parish and priests and ensure the office is manned from Monday to Friday.

In addition to our office staff, we have a housekeeper (3 full days/2 half days per week) who prepares food for Fathers Michael & Pat and ensures that the church and parish centre (including the apartment) are always well looked after.

We also have a part-time gardener (3 days a week) who ensures that the grounds and exterior of the buildings (gutters, etc) are well maintained.

All of our part-time staff have contracts which are in full compliance with Belgian law and which also provide medical cover etc.

On top of the expenditure for the general running of the parish we also, occasionally, have unexpected expenditure such as the upcoming repair of a major gas leak (+- €17,000).

And now to income – what are our main sources of income?

- a) The first and most important source is/was the weekly basket collection which contributes greatly to the income of the parish but which, due to the nature of our parish, is greatly affected by holiday periods (Carnival, Easter, summer, Hallowe'en and Christmas) and also the end of Sunday School activities). Covid-19 has seriously disrupted our ability to avail of this important source of income since March 14th, 2020. We are, as yet, unable to restore the basket collection in the traditional manner and rely on your generosity in donating via the two collection boxes in the church foyer.
- b) The second source is the Standing orders. During the last 12 months, while the number of families having a standing order has slightly decreased, the income from Standing Orders has slightly increased, and for that we are extremely grateful.

This source of income is hugely important as it is a guaranteed, regular, income and is in no way affected by the many holiday periods mentioned earlier or the Sunday School programme. (or indeed the Covid 19 pandemic!!)
And today, the standing order is the focus of our appeal.

- c) The third source is the Parish Fayre—a key event—which brings in a profit of between 25.000€ and 33.000€ each year. It is a hugely important event not only for its financial contribution to the parish but also the social aspect and our integration in the local community. However, due to the Covi-19 pandemic, it was not possible to host the Parish Fayre in 2020 and 2021.

There is no doubt that the expenditure in 2020 and 2021 greatly exceeded our income and we had to supplement our income with transfers from our savings account (rainy day account).

The loss of both summer fayres (2020 & 2021) coupled with the loss of the weekly basket collection resulted in the standing order (and some donations) being our only source of income of the parish.

What we are asking here today is that those parishioners who feel that they are in position to make a regular, monthly (or indeed quarterly, half-yearly or annual) financial contribution without imposing any unnecessary burden on themselves or their family would consider taking out a standing order.

It would be of great benefit to the parish to increase the guaranteed source of income that the standing order provides.

A standing order is available on our Website and the detail in that may be used to set up a standing order through your online home banking.

A copy of the standing order form is also, coincidentally attached to your copy of Words this morning and could be completed and dropped into your bank branch as an alternative to home banking.

To conclude, if I may quote from a financial appeal made by a priest to his parishioners (and I apologise in advance to those who have already heard this story):

**“Good morning dear parishioners, I have good news and bad news.
The good news is that our parish has more than enough money to support our needs.
The bad news is that the money is still in your pockets.”**

Thank you very much for your attention.