

## An Open Letter during challenging economic times

As a parish community, we realize that these tough economic times have caused varying degrees of family hardship. And while we are being informed that positive changes are starting to happen in the economy, we also realize that the future is uncertain and any progress will be shaped by a slow, tough struggle toward recovery.

The vast majority of occupations have been touched in some way. In order to survive, companies have had to cut back where they can. As a result, fellow parishioners have experienced pay cuts, reduced work weeks, or termination. Anyone who has been through a period of involuntarily unemployment knows the agony and strain associated with it. The misery of uncertainty takes a tremendous toll on all concerned. One of the devastating affects that accompanies this current crisis is the feeling of having to carry the weight of financial burdens alone.

With this in mind, we would like to find ways of reaching out to those affected with unemployment hardships and financial struggles. After all, as a community of believers, we are bound together by the common faith we profess. And consequently, as the scriptures tell us, “if one member suffers, all suffer together with that one” (1 Cor 12:26). Therefore, we propose the following two avenues:

**First**, we want to address the isolation and stress frequently associated with job loss. In times of great joy or great sorrow, **bonding with family and friends** produces a good feeling. People out of work need the means to feel good about themselves and to maintain a positive attitude. Knowing that one is not alone, and encouraging each other to get through the current situation while enjoying the company of others can certainly help. We are hoping that activities targeted at bringing people together to enjoy some fun will provide the opportunity to allow relaxation. To this end, we are trying to organize some group activities that will help to bridge the isolation people are experiencing. To start, we would like to get some feedback from parishioners as to their interest in coming together.

**Second**, layoffs, pay cuts, and business closings are forcing families to seek new sources of income. Some parishioners may be going back to work for the first time in many years, others may be making a career change and are seeking employment. We empathize with you in your need and frustration. We are currently exploring ways to help ease the stress of preparing for a job search. Therefore, we want to know if there is any interest in participating in courses that may help you improve your skills for a job search. If we could design and offer an evening or one day weekend seminar, would you be interested in participating? (This is intended for the adult members of our community.)

