



Saint Ambrose Cathedral

Annual Report to the Community

2022-2023

We St. Ambrose Cathedral parish of the Diocese of Des Moines are a diverse community of the rich and poor, disadvantaged and hungry, young and elderly, visitors, and those seeking refuge. We are a Eucharistic community of many cultures. We strive for unity in our diversity expressing our love of God through prayer and worship, justice and service, the ministry of hospitality, and through catechesis, evangelization, and ecumenism. We pursue this mission faithfully by following the example of Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the gifts and talents of our faith community.

Beloved parishioners of St. Ambrose,

Do you remember last year's annual report at the pastoral center when I presented my vision for the parish for the years ahead?

AVE: Active - Apostolic
Vibrant - Visible
Evangelizing

Now, in the following pages, for this year's annual report, I am proud and pleased to report that we have really been AVE!! We did not simply talk about doing, we actually did! We activated our plans, we were apostolic in our actions, our activities brought vibrancy to our parish, our love was visible in the community, and through our love in action, we evangelized!

Pope Francis described the church as a "field hospital for the vulnerable". Indeed, and I must say that St. Ambrose Cathedral is a well-established field hospital in Iowa. We are ready to treat all kinds of needs, especially those who are wounded and broken coming from war-torn home countries. We may not have the best treatment facility, but whatever we have, we share and however we can, we care. We are warm, willing and welcoming.

The 'vulnerable' ones who come to us are trying their best to survive in this country, to rebuild their home, to move on with a hope for a brighter future. It is a painful process to try to forget the trauma of the past, to detach from their place of origin, friends and relatives, and to adapt to unfamiliar environment, new culture, different people and undefined social status. I understand because I am one of these 'vulnerable' too.

Even within our local community, many are lonely and face struggles in their family and personal lives. No one is without needs; everyone needs love and acceptance at the very least. I see this in my pastoral work daily. This field hospital must keep working.

My deep, heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to all of you who have offered your time, talent, and treasure to make SAC Active-Apostolic, Vibrant-Visible, and Evangelizing in this past year. Please continue to be the beacon of light, hope and joy to everyone in this parish, and to me!

This July marked two full years at St. Ambrose for me. It has been quite a bittersweet journey. At this point, I am enjoying more sweetness than when I first came. Thank you all.

Moving forward, strengthened by the intercessions of Mary, our heavenly Mother, we will strive to be the most loving and merciful field hospital for everyone who comes to us in real need. AVE Maria!

Yours faithfully,
Fr. Nivin Scaria
Rector



Saint Ambrose Cathedral has a long standing tradition of welcoming all peoples to worship and find community. As a beacon for newcomers to our city and country, we enjoy the beauty of diverse Catholic traditions from around the world, which enrich us all spiritually. This diversity is celebrated in our liturgies and sacraments as the following photos illustrate.



Building A Community of Faith

St. Ambrose is a diverse community that continues to grow. Many of our faithful were initiated into the church and celebrated sacraments this year.



Registered families - 713

Baptisms - 62

1st Communions - 38

Confirmations - 28

Adults welcomed into the church
through RCIA - 3

Weddings - 39

Funerals - 11



Family Faith Formation



This last year saw an expansion of our Family Faith Formation program along with numerous developments and new initiatives. Fifteen parishioners volunteered to serve as catechists along with our priests and deacons. Many other parishioners volunteered regularly to support these efforts. This year of great change required flexibility, patience and numerous volunteers to make it all work. Together, they accomplished the following in service to the approximately 140 students who participated in our family faith formation program.

- ◆ **Expanded to a weekly format** with a combination of traditional classroom activities and family faith encounters including: Family Rosary, Adoration and Advent and Lenten reconciliation, to name a few.
- ◆ **Transitioned to a two year Confirmation preparation process** with the addition of a 9th grade Confirmation prep class and selected Confirmation preparation materials from Loyola Press.
- ◆ **Expanded sacramental preparation for First Communion** to a year long process with the first semester dedicated to preparation for the sacrament of Reconciliation and the second semester focused on First Communion.
- ◆ **Expanded locations** to include Mercy College for our high school students, giving them dedicated classroom space. We are grateful to Mercy College for this partnership and to the Knights of Columbus who staffed the entrance on class mornings.
- ◆ Through a St Joseph Evangelization Center grant and in-kind donations, **each classroom space is equipped with projectors or monitors** to allow for the addition of digital content in the classroom setting.
- ◆ **Expanded the second grade class to include 1st graders**, eliminating the gap between the Sunday morning program for 3-5 year olds and 2nd grade.
- ◆ **Increased the number and diversity** of our catechists and volunteers.
- ◆ For our 1st through 5th graders, **a new curriculum was implemented:** the Word of Life series from Augustine Institute. This curriculum is affiliated with FORMED allowing us to maximize our FORMED membership.

The photos on the following pages capture the combined efforts of these dedicated parents and volunteers to pass on the faith.



Praying the Rosary as family



Lenten Retreat: Washing of the Feet



Third through fifth graders engaged in their lesson



Preparing for First Communion



Through the parent class, parents learn about a variety of topics that are of interest to them, including the teachings of the Church, the sacraments, liturgical seasons, the Catechism and raising children in the faith.



Family Faith Encounters with Jesus

Family Faith Encounters with Jesus were added to the Family Faith Formation program this year. These are opportunities for families to learn and practice their faith together in community with other families. Offerings included Adoration, Church Tours, Ways to Pray, the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Advent and Lenten Family Reconciliation services, and Ask a Priest, an opportunity for students and parents to ask questions of our priests and deacons.





First Communion

38 students received the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion in the spring of 2023





Confirmation

28 high school students worked hard to prepare for the sacrament which was conferred by Bishop Joensen on May 28th.



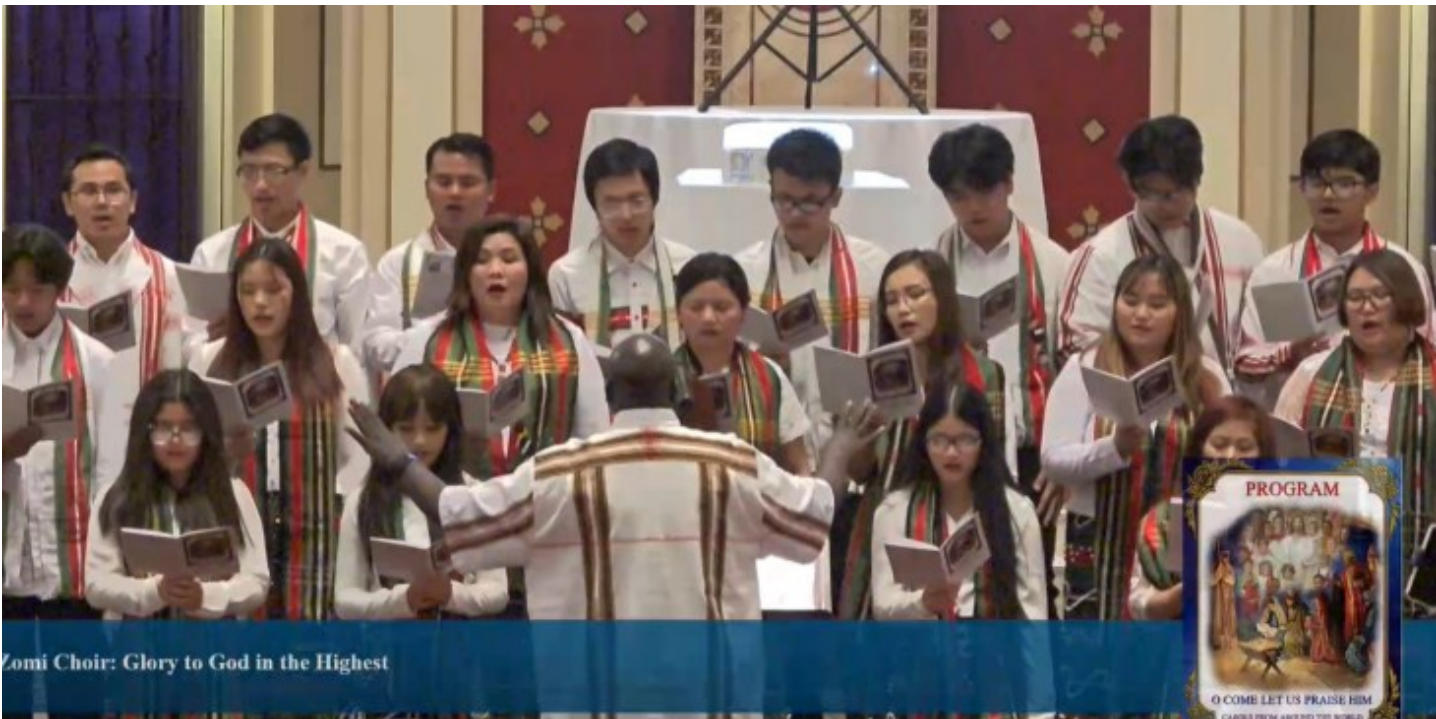
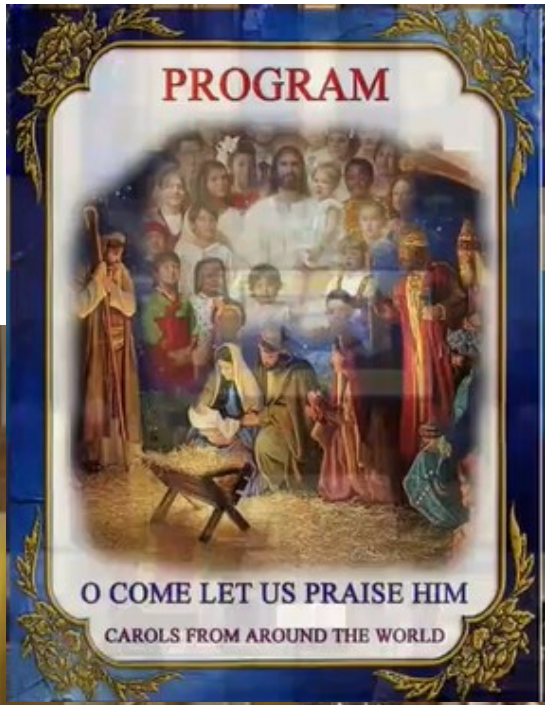
Investing in the Future of the Church

In the summer of 2022, the Diocese invited young Catholic adults to join a Diocesan pilgrimage to the 2023 World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal. The Saint Ambrose community had a great response to this invitation and began planning for dozens of our members to join Catholics from around the world to meet in prayer, song and worship in Lisbon in the summer of 2023.

Preparations included fundraising, paperwork, obtaining citizenship, passports and visas along with prayer and fellowship. Countless parishioners, family members and friends joined together to raise funds in a variety of ways to support the young adults of the parish in their efforts to prepare for World Youth Day in Lisbon. The relationships that were forged within the community this past year will serve as a base for fundraising for years to come. These photos capture the joyful efforts of volunteers at Principal Park and Drake basketball, just two of our new fundraising efforts.



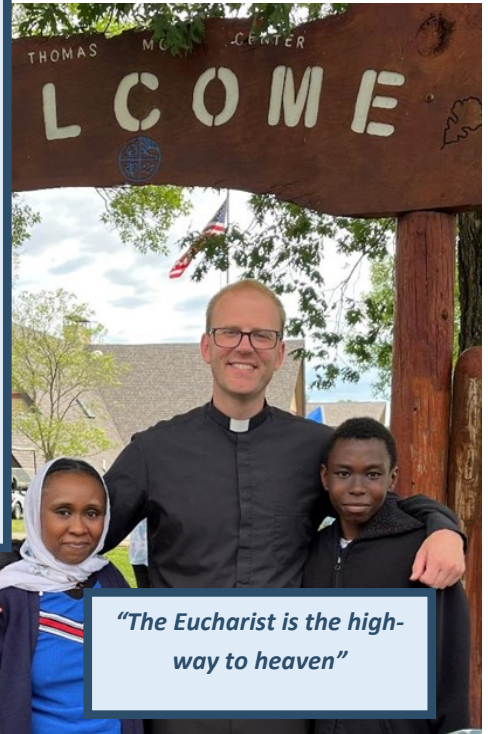
On December 11, 2022, a first of its kind music concert was held as a fundraiser for World Youth Day. O Come Let Us Praise Him, inspired those in attendance through the joyful sounds of parishioners representing five different communities from two continents. Directed by Father Ambrose, these choirs practiced for weeks to prepare for this concert which many hope will become a regular event.





Investing in Our Youth: Catholic Youth Camp

Because of the prayers, financial support and love of this faith community, 70 St Ambrose young people grew in their faith through a week at Catholic Youth Camp during the summer of 2022! Here are but a few of the joyous moments and lessons learned.....



"The Eucharist is the highway to heaven"

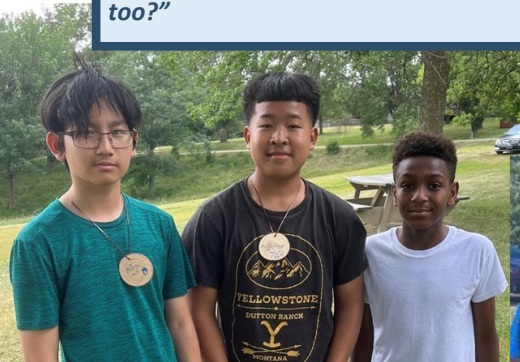


"Camp was cleansing...Its always a blessing to go...And the experience is different each time....thank you for allowing us to go and grow in our faith and represent ourselves, our families, our church and God!"



"We learned about St Teresa of Avila...She was pouty and moody but she changed her ways and became as saint. Can we become saints too?"

"Seeing Jesus in Adoration was the best thing that every happened to me....sitting there and re-thinking life"



Adult Faith Formation

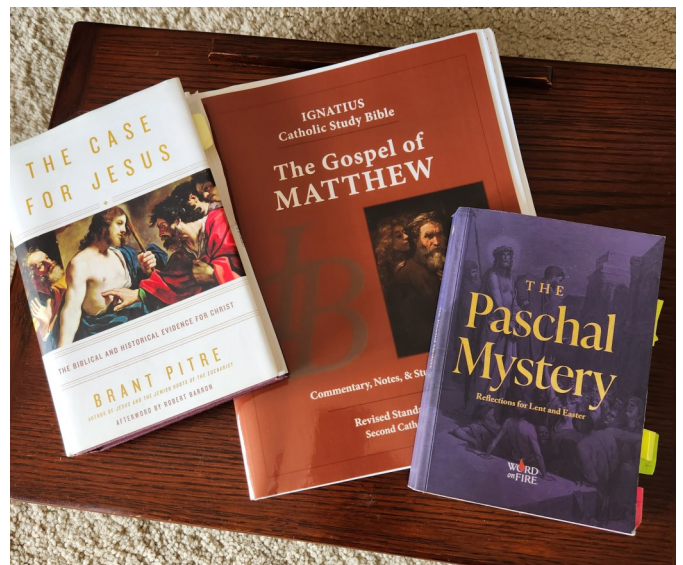


Adult Faith Formation events at St. Ambrose are offered in addition to Family Faith Formation events during the school year. Led by George Brucks and Diane Dentlinger, AFF held 21 sessions for approximately 60 participants in 2022-23. These 21 sessions were divided into three different series:

- An 8-session Bible study on *The Case for Jesus* in the Fall 2022;
- A 3-session Bible study on the first three chapters of the *Gospel of Matthew* in Advent 2022;
- A total of 10 meetings for two small faith sharing groups on the *Paschal Mystery* during Lent 2023.

All Adult Faith Formation events were free of charge.

The goal of this ministry, in addition to study and faith sharing, is to enable people of the parish to get to know each other better.





Building Community

A number of events were held to celebrate the rich diversity of this community, to serve the other and to build up this community of faith.

Examples of these efforts include:

- ◆ Parish picnic in August 2022
- ◆ Parish report to the community meeting
- ◆ Food Festival to raise funds for WYD following the Christmas concert
- ◆ Fat Tuesday food celebration
- ◆ Soup supper following the Stations of the Cross.



Caring for One Another



More than 20 parishioners participate often through **St. Vincent de Paul** to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to neighbors in need. We enjoy praying together at our monthly meetings and working together in service to others. We have worked closely with Father Ambrose and Father Nivin to help meet the needs of parishioners and others who seek help at our parish office.

Our parishioners gave generously to those in need through our SVDP:

- Gave food and hygiene items valued at \$3,200 on First Weekend Masses, to be distributed at SVDP food pantries. Also, \$1,200 from parishioners and the conference made it possible for the pantries to purchase items most needed.
- Brought clothes and home items that nearly filled the SVDP Donation Truck at the Cathedral parking lot on April 30.

Conference members donated more than 1,000 hours in service, including the following help:

- More than \$6,000 helped to pay rent, electricity or food for people in urgent need in our parish or community. This help was given with personal visits and encouragement by our priests or by Vincentian volunteers at St. Ambrose or other metro parishes.
- Our Vincentians also made 147 connections with persons in need over the past year. This included home visits, phone calls, and greeting cards to persons experiencing illness or bereavement. Members also helped Faith Formation students make Christmas cards for elderly or ill parishioners.
- For the homeless, SVDP provided bus tokens and comfort items for distribution through the parish office and by Bishop Joensen.
- Our members provided food and prepared and served a meal for 30 people at Catholic Charities Family Shelter in June and at Catholic Worker House in October.



Since its beginning in May of 2022, the **St. Ambrose Walking with Moms in Need** team has accomplished much to make sure that parishioners have access to current information about local resources for pregnant and parenting mothers. Our goal is that each parishioner will know where to refer a pregnant or parenting mother for help.

In its first year, the team

- Met monthly to pray and plan how to take an inventory of local resources for pregnant and parenting mothers
- Shared information with parishioners
- Built a parish support network
- Visited and interviewed agencies that serve pregnant and parenting mothers
- Sponsored a diaper drive as a Lenten giving opportunity in March 2023
- Distributed diapers and wipes to parish families and delivered extras to Catholic Charities Food Pantry
- Completed the inventory of local resources in May 2023
- Designed and distributed a printed resource brochure in June 2023
- Designed a Walking with Moms in Need webpage for the parish website
- Posted an online resource directory on the parish website
- Considered ways to serve pregnant and parenting moms in our parish, including planning future diaper drives and celebrating Baptisms

After completing the inventory process and sharing what we learned with the parish in the brochure and online resource directory, the team has decided to continue our efforts to support moms in our parish through prayer and service. Starting in July 2023, we are meeting quarterly to pray; make sure information in the brochure and online resource directory is current; add new resources; and plan ways our team and parish can support pregnant and parenting mothers. Going forward, our ministry will be called **Walking with Moms**.



*For I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
A stranger and you welcomed me,
Naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me.
Matthew 25:35*

The **Knights of Columbus** generously share their time and talents to raise money for various causes. Some of the activities they have done this past year include:

- Handing out Tootsie Rolls at the Iowa State Fair
- Fall Breakfast
- Burrito Bowl
- Lenten Lunches (Fridays during Lent)



Saint Ambrose parishioners lift up those in need of prayer through the parish **Prayer Chain**. Anyone seeking prayers to help face a life situation can request prayers on their behalf. Or a friend or loved one can request prayers as well.

Please keep the Prayer Chain in mind when you or someone you know could benefit from prayer.

Through the **Homebound Ministry**, parishioners are able to remain a connection to our faith community. Volunteers visit parishioners in their homes to prayerfully bring the Eucharist and encouragement and to share the faith and a smile.



Saint Ambrose is one of four downtown churches that work together to provide a free lunch program through **Connection Café**. This meal ministry serves homeless and low income individuals and families in downtown Des Moines. Lunch is served at noon, every Monday-Friday.

This service depends on the generosity of members of the downtown parishes and other supporters to provide funding, time and talent. Volunteer groups provide the food, prepare it and help serve over 120 meals, 5 days a week.



Refugee Ministry

St. Ambrose Cathedral is often described as a “Catholic United Nations Parish.” Our parish family consists of people from all over the world, including refugees from Southeast Asia, most recently from Burma and from the African countries of Sudan, South Sudan and Eritrea.

Making a home and navigating our society can be a challenge for newcomers from other countries. Under the leadership of Father Ambrose Ladu, staff and volunteers work together to help refugees build a new life in Iowa.

Generous donors provide funding for these efforts. A Community Leaders Council, consisting of refugee leaders from our parish community help in identifying needs and solutions.

Many of the pilgrims who signed up for the World Youth Day pilgrimage are from refugee families and several were eligible for citizenship. With Father Ambrose’s leadership, staff and volunteers worked with these pilgrims to complete the paperwork for citizenship and for the oral exam. Through these collective efforts, twelve of the pilgrims became U.S. citizens.

Parishioner, catechist and music leader, Mosez Kima was one of twelve Saint Ambrose World Youth Day pilgrims who obtained their US citizenship in preparation for travel to Portugal.

Congratulations to each of them!



Welcoming the Broader Community of Faith



As the Cathedral for the Diocese of Des Moines, the Saint Ambrose community welcomes the faithful from the broader Des Moines Community and beyond. These are but a few of the ways Saint Ambrose hosts the faithful throughout the year:

- ◆ Many Diocesan events are held at the Cathedral. Examples include Ordination and the Eucharistic Procession.
- ◆ Many groups both Catholic and other faith traditions are welcomed for tours.
- ◆ The Cathedral hosts religious communities that hold meetings in Des Moines.
- ◆ Retreats and Masses are held at Saint Ambrose on a regular basis for a number of communities including: Sudanese, Myanmar and Eritrean.
- ◆ A healing service is held at the Cathedral on a monthly basis.
- ◆ Milestone events for Mercy College like the Pinning Ceremony for nursing students and the Inauguration Mass of Dr. Adreain Henry, President



Time Talent and Treasure: The Work of the Stewardship Committee

In the fall of 2022, a Stewardship Committee was established for Saint Ambrose Cathedral. The focus of this committee is to increase awareness within the parish of our baptismal call to be good stewards of our resources in support of the work of the church. The inaugural committee members included: Father Nivin, Earl Kelly, Anita O’Gara and Theresa Lewis.

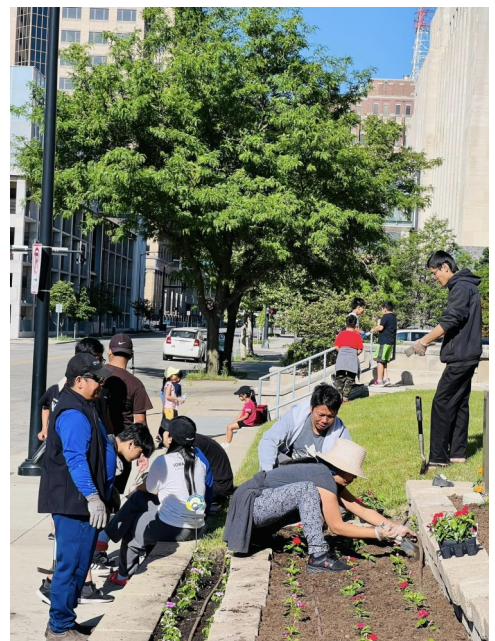
Education on the importance of time, talent and treasure in support of Saint Ambrose’s ministries was a key focus along with facilitating ways for parishioners to share their gifts with the parish. A time, talent and treasure weekend was held informing parishioners of the many needs within the parish for their time and talents. New ways to give were also developed including the introduction of ACH giving and simplifying giving through Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa to Saint Ambrose fund accounts.



Diversification of funding sources was also an initial priority and there was significant success in these efforts:

- ◆ A number of key partnerships were established for fundraising, including the Iowa Cubs, Drake University, Panda Express and HundredX
- ◆ Grant funds were actively sought and awarded to support both faith formation and facility needs. Grant funds were received from the Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa (CFSWIA) and St Joseph Evangelization Center. \$10,000 from CFSWIA funded security cameras for parish grounds. St Joseph awarded \$5,700 to support family faith formation technology and resource needs and a new website for the parish.
- ◆ Information sharing and communication were identified as foundational to all of these efforts. In response, an Annual Report was presented in the fall of 2022, this is the second Annual Report to the community. A monthly newsletter was established and the website was re-vamped.
- ◆ There was an emphasis on sharing the Saint Ambrose story with individuals who might be interested in providing financial support. Many new individual donors supported Saint Ambrose ministries including individuals who established challenge funds.
- ◆ Fundraising events also played a significant role in the diversification of our funding sources. The Christmas Carol concert and food festival and the Fat Tuesday food festival are examples of successful fundraisers. Scores of parishioners shared their time and talent to ensure the success of these endeavors.
- ◆ In-kind donations were received from parishioners and friends of Saint Ambrose including the donation of Smart televisions to support the technology needs of our family faith formation classrooms.
- ◆ Members of the Zomi community from Burma came together to share their talents in the beautification of parish grounds. They installed the planting of annuals in the front of the church and courtyard which enhanced the beauty of the Cathedral’s grounds well into the fall.

And, this group is just getting started! Thank you to all of our parishioners, staff and friends of Saint Ambrose Cathedral who believe in what we can do together and so generously share of their time, talent and treasure to support our various ministries.



St. Ambrose Cathedral
Statement of Activities
June 30, 2023

	Actual	Budget	Difference
Tithing and Holy Day Collections	\$ 500,282	\$ 548,000	\$ (47,718)
Other Operating Income	127,609	159,275	(31,666)
Designated Donations	234,076	30,000	204,076
Foundation	165,743	95,000	70,743
Income Totals	\$ 1,027,710	\$ 832,275	\$ 195,435
Parish Adminstraton	\$ 295,048	\$ 335,707	\$ (40,659)
Catholic School Assessment	122,904	164,336	(41,432)
World Youth Day	159,846	-	159,846
Liturgy	20,846	23,000	(2,154)
Music	44,773	52,284	(7,511)
Rectory	55,043	54,908	135
Buidling & Grounds	146,250	127,662	18,588
Faith & Youth Formation	42,770	47,663	(4,893)
Foundation	10,637	10,000	637
Expense Totals	\$ 898,117	\$ 815,560	\$ 82,557
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ 129,593	\$ 16,715	\$ 112,878
Major Building Repairs	\$ 39,756		
Sound System/Security Camera	33,571		
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ 56,266		
Cash and Investments	6/30/2023	6/30/2022	Change
Operations	\$ 117,499	\$ 59,911	\$ 57,588
Restricted Cash	2,234,512	2,129,856	104,656
Fixed/Other Assets	4,721,199	4,708,653	12,546
Total Net Assets	\$ 7,073,210	\$ 6,898,420	174,790
Funds Held for Others	\$ 62,778	\$ -	\$ 62,778