



Barnabas rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain faithful to the Lord in firmness of heart, for he was a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and faith.

Acts 11:23-24

October 6, 2023

Dear St. Barnabas Parish,

As you may know, the Indiana legislature recently expanded student eligibility for receipt of an Indiana Choice Scholarship. As a result, over 80% of our students are eligible and receive this scholarship this academic year. For instance, a family of four that makes less than \$222,000 a year is eligible for the scholarship.

In light of these developments, our School Commission, Finance Council, and Parish Pastoral Council recently reviewed and approved the following plan and have recommended to me, as the pastor of St. Barnabas, that this plan be implemented.

Over the course of the next three years, and possibly a fourth year if needed, our plan is to incrementally increase the participating parishioner tuition fee from its current level of \$1600 per student per year to about \$6400 per student per year. The tuition for non-parishioner families will continue to rise each year as needed for inflation or other budget needs. Currently non-parish families pay \$6966 per student per year.

For the 2023-24 school year, most of our students are eligible for a Choice scholarship of about \$6,100 that can be applied to their tuition. Over the years, this amount has increased each year for inflation. It will be our goal to keep the tuition rate for our parishioner students just below the scholarship amount so that they can receive the full benefit of the scholarship and not have to pay any additional money for tuition.

The following is just one illustration on how we may implement this plan over the next three years, which assumes about 4% inflation and assumes Choice Scholarships will continue to rise:

2023-24 year: \$1600 for each parish student, \$6966 for each non-parish student.

2024-25 year: \$3200 for each parish student, \$7300 for each non-parish student.

2025-26 year: \$4800 for each parish student, \$7600 for each non-parish student.

2026-27 year: \$6400 for each parish student, \$7900 for each non-parish student.

In subsequent years, we would keep this same distance between parish and non-parish students. For example, for the 2027-28 year the three-year phase-in will have ended and so we would simply raise the parish and non-parish rates each 4% to \$6650 and \$8200, respectively. Parish school families will still be asked to be registered in the parish, have a stewardship intent card on file, and have a history of giving to the parish to be eligible for the participating parishioner tuition fee.

Naturally, this plan would gradually raise the amount of revenue the school collects. But it is essential that the parish still financially support the school, as it is the largest ministry in the parish. Last year the parish provided \$970,000 from Sunday tithing for the school's operating budget. That is 42% of all Sunday tithing. With the increase in tuition each year under this new funding plan, we will gradually roll back the percentage of Sunday tithing that goes to the school until we hit a set amount between 10-20%. This level would be consistent with what most parishes provide their schools.

With this new funding model and increased revenue, the school will be able to recruit and retain our high-quality teachers with higher salaries, hire more teachers' aides in the classrooms, purchase other educational resources, and be able to afford future capital projects, such as a new school roof, which may need replacement in 4-5 years at an estimated cost of about \$300,000.

Additionally, with this new funding model the parish will be able to better fund its ministries since it would retain more of the Sunday tithing. This could include enhancing our worship music, adding to our youth ministry, and funding more Outreach ministries, such as the parish mission trips.

To help with this 3-4 year transition, we will set aside some parish funds that can be offered as financial assistance to any impacted parishioner family that is not eligible for a Choice scholarship and has a demonstrated need.

To learn more about Indiana Choice Scholarships, you may want to check out the websites for the Office of Catholic Schools for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, the Indiana Department of Education, and the Indiana Non-public Education Association.

God has blessed our parish and school and he has blessed each one of us. We are all called to tithe to our parish to support all of our parish and school programs and needs. With your sustaining support, we can continue to faithfully ensure that any parishioner family wanting to provide their child a Catholic education at St. Barnabas can do so, regardless of their economic status, just as Fr. John Sciarra envisioned in 1965 when our parish was founded.

May God continue to bless St. Barnabas Parish and School.

Fr. Guy Roberts, pastor

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Guy Roberts". The ink is dark and the signature is written in a fluid, personal style.