

Saint Rita Parish



Questions and Answers

What is St. Rita “United in Faith and Community”?

United in Faith and Community is a multifaceted initiative at St. Rita to strengthen our parish and school. The primary goals of this initiative are to increase Mass attendance, ministry participation, regular financial support, and to ensure the continued long-term growth and success of St. Rita parish.

Why is St. Rita Parish undertaking this initiative?

This initiative started in April 2024 to especially address worship attendance and offertory collections which had decreased significantly from pre-pandemic levels. More recently, St. Rita Parish is seeing a renewed faith and vitality. Engagement in our ministries is growing again, opportunities for education of all ages and fellowship have increased significantly, we have started new ministries for education, hospitality and service, our school enrollment is up by 45%, and there has been a 5% increase in Mass attendance.

Since starting United in Faith and Community, offertory collections have increased 7%. This, along with other income such as tuition and fees, has helped the parish meet operating expenses and undertake campus improvement projects that had been sidelined for more than five years.

This last year has been very helpful; however, we recognize it is going to take an ongoing effort to sustain our parish and school and to be able to make needed capital improvements.

Are there specific goals for Mass attendance or ministry participation?

Currently we average just over 530 attendees at our weekend Masses. Six years ago, this number was over 1,000 and 12 years ago, this number was 1,250. We are hopeful that we can grow by at least 150 more families (whether that be individuals, couples, or families with children) participating in our weekend services in the near-term.

Having more families attend Mass is a great goal. How can we help?

As Fr. Tim mentioned, the first step is to be inviting and welcoming to people around us, especially those who may have left St. Rita or the Catholic Church for various reasons. Many of us were taught that our faith is a private matter. But that’s not how Jesus calls us to act. He calls us to spread the good news – to make disciples of all people – and to be a loving community. Pray and let the Holy Spirit guide you in finding appropriate ways to reach out to others and invite them to St. Rita (or back to St. Rita).

If St. Rita School is growing, shouldn’t we see more families in Church?

We are seeing an increase in the number of families, especially at our 10:30 Sunday Mass, largely due to the attendance of school-age families from St. Rita School and the Faith Formation Program. This is an area that we will continue to encourage. We believe there is an opportunity for a stronger connection between the school, faith formation program, and church and are working on ways to make this happen. It should also be noted that St. Rita School serves the Webster/Wayne County area and some families belong to other local parishes.

How many students attend St. Rita School? How many students attend Faith Formation?

Current School enrollment including Pre-K is 236 students. The Faith Formation and Sacramental program serves another 200 students. So in total, we have more than 400 youth participating in our school age education and formation programs.

We would like to be more involved in St. Rita. How can we learn more about the ministries offered?

Our website <https://www.saintritawebster.org/> lists all the ministries and their respective leaders. Feel free to contact any of these leaders for more information. Also, you may call the office (585-671-1100) to talk with one of our staff members who will gladly give you more information about our ministries.

Are there specific goals for financial giving?

Our goal is to raise collections by \$100,000 annually. This amounts to an average increase of approximately \$2,000 weekly.

What is the status of the diocese bankruptcy? Will money raised from donations be used for settling the lawsuits against the Diocese?

The final settlement and closing of the Child Victims Act (CVA) lawsuit against the Diocese of Rochester and its parishes is currently nearing completion pending a final ruling by the judge. It is anticipated that this will be closed at some point in 2025. St. Rita has already made the required payment to the Settlement fund being held in escrow. We do not anticipate any further requirements for additional funding from St. Rita Parish. Money collected through our offertory is fully intended for the benefit of St. Rita Church and School.

Why should we consider increasing our offertory gift?

We are deeply appreciative of all the donations to St. Rita Church and School. It allows us to carry on the work of our church and to support our school, faith formation, and other programs as well as maintain the buildings and grounds. However, this also represents an opportunity for each of our parishioners to examine their giving (to St. Rita and other charities) and intentionally decide how they can increase their generosity in gratitude for all the gifts God has provided.

What will the increased offertory collections be used for?

Prior to 2024, St. Rita parish had operated at a deficit in total for the prior four years. Expenses continue to increase, so it is challenging to balance the budget with the current offertory and other revenue sources. The initial focus is to use the funds to cover future operating expenses, which is largely made up of salaries/benefits, insurance, utilities, maintenance office supplies, and books. Additionally, we are looking to use the increased giving to fund increased wages for staff employees and teachers. Finally, the increased giving will contribute to campus improvement projects.

Why do the wages of the staff and teachers of St. Rita Church and School need to be increased?

We have a very dedicated and loyal staff. The faculty and staff kept St. Rita School open for in person learning during the risks of the pandemic when the public schools were reduced to remote-learning only. Despite a temporary Covid related reduction in hours, the parish staff stuck with us out of love for the parish. However, most of our staff and teachers earn 30-35% less than comparable salaries in the public sector. As a result, it is very difficult to attract and retain new teachers and staff when someone leaves or retires. While we may never be able to match the salaries and wages of the public sector, Fr. Tim, the St. Rita Finance Council, and the parishioners assessing future plans feel we are called to increase wages to a more sustainable living level as the Christian thing to do. We cannot preach generosity to others without adequately taking care of our own employees.

How does St. Rita ensure that money being spent is done so wisely?

Budget plans are set annually with the approval of the Finance Council. There is a very strict process on approving spending managed by our Finance Director, Ms. Joan Sullivan. Furthermore, there are guidelines and audits by the Diocese of Rochester on such things as obtaining bids for large scale improvements. Any concerns may be brought up to Fr. Tim, the Finance Director, or Finance Council. There is full transparency in all financial matters undertaken by St. Rita.

What are the larger projects planned for campus improvement over the next 3-5 years?

The Buildings and Grounds committee has developed a list of both immediate and long-term needs. The following is a list of some of the items that are estimated to cost over \$10,000.

- Parking lot repaving
- Door replacements
- Parish Center floor resurfacing
- Modernization of school classrooms, main corridors, and bathrooms

Has St. Rita contacted local and parishioner owned business to help with operating costs and campus improvement projects?

We are blessed to have several parishioner owned businesses offer their services to St. Rita for no or a greatly reduced cost. These along with volunteer efforts have saved the parish significantly. This generosity is greatly appreciated. We welcome the help and support of local and parishioner owned business. In some cases, we do need to bid projects per the guidance of the Diocese of Rochester. This is to ensure we are following best practices and being transparent even with the generosity of these businesses.

Doesn't St. Rita have a long-term fund that can be used to cover capital and other needs?

St. Rita does have a dedicated Long-Term Stable Patrimony fund. The current value of this account is over \$500,000. The money is in a closely managed investment fund called Communis which was established for use by all parishes in the Diocese of Rochester. Withdrawals are restricted to 5% annually. The very nature of this account is to provide for generations well into the future. It is our goal to not use any of this base funding to support St. Rita unless absolutely necessary.

How do we sign up for electronic giving?

The best way to do this is to go to the St. Rita website and follow the process under the Giving tab. Our online giving is through Vanco, a processing agent that provides the means and security for managing online giving transactions. Feel free to call the Finance office / Lisa Hendershot at 585-544-8889 x2116 or email webironfinance@dor.org and the staff will help with any issues or questions.