

St. Matthew the Apostle Mission  
13333 Coursey Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70816  
Priest Report · January 28, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

As we reflect on this past year, I offer the phrase from one of our petitions that asks God to “establish the work of our helpless hands.” We can have the best plans, more money than we know what to do with, and the most Orthodox of Orthodox-looking churches, but if God does not establish the work we set our hands to, then none of these things matter. If our desire is not to make this church a place solely for the showing forth of God’s glory, then it doesn’t matter what kind of building we are in. If we do not love each other enough to truly desire this place to be a house of prayer for all people to stand before God, then the music we sing will rise no higher than this ceiling whether it be a drop ceiling or vaulted.

Yet, what have we seen this past year? More people coming to the church who are humble enough to stand with us at the Liturgy and ask God for mercy. I offer you no greater marker of success than this one feature of our community. The more honest we are with ourselves about our own issues and struggles, the more inviting of a community we will be to others. I have adopted St. Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 11 as the unofficial slogan for St. Matthew’s: “Who is weak, and I am not weak?...If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness...” This past year we have struggled to hide from God less in order to be known by Him more, accepting that salvation has everything to do with who God is and very little to do with what I bring to the table. The Church offers us an honest and safe place to struggle and to find the healing that is within our capacity to receive. I hope we have more of the same in the upcoming year.

### **2023**

The St. Matthew’s community continues to grow and thrive in Baton Rouge. We continue striving to make our parish a welcome place for visitors, beginning with our team of greeters before the services and by offering food and fellowship afterwards. This past year we have celebrated more services and served more food at coffee hour; our dedicated choir continues to grow, and the readers and servers are also slowly adding new members. Our children continue to enjoy church school offered by our patient and willing teachers, and we have a steady stream of catechumens and inquirers who receive catechesis. Our Men’s and Women’s Groups continue to offer opportunities to build community outside the church walls, and the bookstore has re-invented itself.

In addition, this year we hosted the Deanery Retreat, a first for our parish, and enjoyed the presence of all the priests in the Mississippi River Deanery for a few days. We have purchased a Golgotha Icon, a significant piece of iconography to enhance the beauty of our worship space. We have also undertaken a capital campaign in order to prepare for our eventual and inevitable move to a new location that will provide us with the space we need to continue to grow as a community. The church school kids led us in a "sock fundraiser" this winter in an effort to supply this basic item to those in need.

Our metrical book reflects the following numbers for the year:

- Baptisms and Chrismations - 14
- Weddings - 0
- Funerals - 1
- Average Sunday attendance - ~60 (100 at Pascha)

As we anticipate God's blessing in 2024, we are grateful for our Team Leaders who willingly offer their time and efforts to help organize the communal life of the parish. Broadly speaking, we are exploring ways to build community life and strengthen relationships among parishioners. We hope to strengthen participation in our Men's and Women's Groups and find a Team Leader for our Outreach Team. We also continue our search for a new church home, focusing on being as financially prepared as we are able so that when the right property becomes available, we are ready. We trust that God's timing is best and in the meantime, and by God's grace, we will continue doing what we do: worshipping, repenting, serving, fasting and feasting.

May God establish the work of our helpless hands and make St. Matthew's a fitting place to show forth His glory.

I remain your servant in Christ.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Fr. Joshua Trant