



## Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 5, 2012 B

### Annual Catholic Appeal Next Weekend

Next weekend is Catholic Appeal Sunday in the 90+ parishes and missions in our nine county diocese. If you are a regular in our parish, you have most likely received a letter from the diocese regarding Catholic Appeal.

For those of you who are new to our parish, Catholic Appeal is the way all the parishes of our diocese join together to fund the administration and ministries of our central office: the department that oversees all the construction going on in parishes; Finance Department for parish finances and audits; Liturgy Department for the worship life of the parishes and diocese; Marriage and Family Life Department for marriage enrichment and pre-Cana program (couples planning for marriage); Office of Schools and Religious Education for the forty Catholic schools in our diocese and the faith formation programs in each parish, including youth ministry; the department for the formation of seminarians and ongoing formation of clergy; Human Resources for personnel issues of parishes and the diocese; fingerprinting department; Catholic Charities; and our Sister Diocese in the Dominican Republic. (I may have omitted some departments or diocesan ministries.) Overseeing the life of 90+ parishes is a big job. It requires many skilled personnel.

**Our assessment:** At the time the bulletin was sent, we did not know what our assessment was.

In the past, each parish was assessed a flat rate of 16% of its offertory income. Since then, assessment rates have changed, based on the following formula:

- *Very large parishes* (income of \$2 million or more) are assessed 19.4%.
- *Large parishes* (income between \$1 million and \$2 million) are assessed 18.17% (Ascension falls into this category).

- *Medium-sized parishes* (income between \$500,000 and \$1 million) are assessed 16.9%.
- *Small parishes* (income of less than \$500,000) are assessed 15.7%.

Newcomers to our parish who are in a position to participate in our *Catholic Appeal* may wonder how much to give. A general guideline is “give as the Lord has given to you.” (“*We desire not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice.*”) In our parish last year, we received gifts ranging from \$5 to \$3,000.

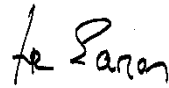
If you are in a position to be a *major donor* by giving a gift of \$1,000 or more, please consider doing so. If you cannot be a major donor, give at a level that you can and that makes you feel good about your gift.

All levels of giving are welcome and appreciated. I only ask that you be as generous as you can. For example, if you plan to give \$250, or even \$1,000, but can give a bit more, consider doing so. When we go the extra mile, we are doing our part to make up for those who in previous years had given generous gifts but are hurting at this time.

**Non-registered parishioners.** I am aware that some people have been coming to our parish for years and do not register. Registration in a parish is a personal choice that each person must make for him/herself. If we decide not to register because we do not want to participate in the financial responsibilities of the parish even though we are in a position to do so, then we have made a *selfish* and *greedy* decision. If you come to church on a regular basis and benefit from the services offered by the parish, I would hope you would take your responsibility seriously to help your parish with its financial obligations. If you decide to contribute to Catholic Appeal (checks are to be made out to Ascension Catholic Church), please know that we will *not* register you. You will only become an *official* member of the parish if and when *you* decide to do so. Envelopes will be in the pews next Sunday to allow you to participate if you choose to do so.

**Winter Parishioners.** We welcome all of our winter parishioners. I know that many of you are registered and play an active part in the parish life, including financially, while you are here. Thank you. I realize that most of you have some form of *Catholic Appeal* in your home diocese. If you are here six months, perhaps you can give 50% of what you normally set aside for the funding of our diocese. If you are only here three or four months, perhaps you might consider sharing with us 25% of what you set aside to help our diocese.

Have a blessed week,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Le Saran". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

### **Something to think and pray about**

For a few years, I have put the following piece in the bulletin on the week prior to Catholic Appeal Sunday. I believe it is a reflection worth reading and praying about at least once a year for it should help us to keep a biblical perspective on our finances.

In his book *The Treasure Principle—Discovering the Secret of Joyful Giving*, Randy Alcorn speaks of six Treasure Principles. The sixth principle states: **God prospers me not to raise my standard of living but to raise my standard of giving.**

Even though I am well aware that God did not prosper too many of us financially these past few years, the above thought is still worth reflecting on. God blesses us financially so that we can be *more generous* and not *more selfish*. Too often in our world, when people are financially blessed, they only use their newfound wealth to *raise their standard of living and fail to raise their level of giving*. The above principle reminds us that if God blesses us financially, he does so *primarily* to give us the opportunity (and joy) to be magnanimous in our giving. Sure, we may raise our standard of living a bit, but God's generosity to us is primarily intended to make us more generous and not more greedy.

In Alcorn's book, the fifth principle states: "*Giving is the only antidote to materialism.*"—which may be interpreted as "giving and sharing are God's medicine for our greedy tendencies." My assumption is that most of us have selfish tendencies and if these are not kept in check, we will become greedy people who use God's blessings *not* as a wonderful occasion to bless others but solely for our own enrichment. How sad that would be! I believe the only way to keep our greedy or materialistic tendencies in check is to be *consistent* in setting aside a portion of our income to support our church family and the poor.