



## Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 7, 2010 C

### **NEXT SUNDAY IS CATHOLIC APPEAL SUNDAY IN THE DIOCESE OF ORLANDO This Year's Assessment is \$294,975**

Next weekend is *Catholic Appeal* Sunday in our Diocese. It is the way the 80 parishes and 12 missions in our diocese fund the ministries and administration of our central office.

#### **A change in the way parishes are assessed**

This past year, I sat with three other pastors on a diocesan committee made up mainly lay men and women from several of our parishes to review the funding formula for our Catholic Appeal. Until now, the diocese has had *one size fits all* formula for our Catholic Appeal assessments, namely 15% of offertory income. One problem with this is the definition of "offertory income" varied from one parish to another. Some parishes defined offertory income very broadly and all inclusively, while other parishes had a narrower or more limited definition. This difference has produced an unfair playing field resulting in a higher assessment for those parishes that used a broad definition of offertory income than those parishes with a narrower definition. Such disparity required an adjustment before another appeal cycle could begin.

Another issue that needed to be dealt with was last year's big operating shortfall of \$1.4 million sustained by three of our five Catholic high schools. The problem was not so much poor management as parents being unable to pay tuition fees.

Rather than have a *few* parishes take responsibility for a local High School's deficit, the diocese is asking *all* parishes to pitch in – a decision I very much agree with.

After a review of the incomes of the 90+ parishes of our diocese, our committee decided to change from the *one size fits all* formula to *four formulas* based on the income of the parishes. The parishes have been divided into the following four categories.

- *Very large parishes* (income \$2 million +) will be assessed 19.4% of assessable income.

- *Large parishes* (income between \$1 million & \$2 million), will be assessed 18.17% (Ascension falls into this category.)
- *Medium sized parishes* (income between \$500,000- \$1 million) will be assessed 16.9%
- *Small parishes* (income of less than \$500,000) will
  - be assessed 15.7%

As I mentioned last Sunday, those of you who utilize the school envelope found in the monthly envelope package, should henceforth write your check to Ascension Catholic *School* and *not* to Ascension Catholic Church.

Personally, I do agree that parishes with a greater capacity to raise money should contribute more to the operation of the diocese. It is also important to mention that the diocese this past year has made severe cuts to nearly all of its departments.

#### **Our assessment this year is \$294,975.**

This year's assessment is \$29,000 more than last year, an increase of 11%.

It would be wonderful if those of us who can increase last year's donation by 10%, will in fact do so.

Since this is a *one year adjustment in the Catholic Appeal assessment formula*, I can say with a good deal of certainty that our assessment next year will be very close to what it is this year, maybe even a little less.

*Parishes with schools.* Without going into details, parishes that give tuition assistance to students in Catholic primary and secondary schools do receive a full deduction of that money when it comes to their Catholic Appeal assessment. Hence, the new Catholic Appeal formulas will impact large income parishes *without* schools *much more* than large parishes with schools.

#### **Six Levels of giving in 2009**

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 \$5,000.

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.

I am *most grateful* to all of you who, year after year, participate in our *Catholic Appeal*. In doing so,

- you are expressing your support for the larger church that every Catholic belongs to.
- you are helping your parish take care of a huge financial responsibility. If we do not reach our assessment goal, we must take money from our reserves to make up the difference. But if all of us who are in a position to participate do so, we will succeed in reaching our goal.

How our Catholic Appeal monies are spent, may be found in the brochure that our registered parishioners received this past week in the mail.

**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, then I would hope you would also take your responsibility seriously to help your parish take care of its financial obligations. If you decide to contribute to Catholic Appeal (checks are made out to Ascension Church), please know that we will not register you. You will only become an official member of the parish when you decide to do so. Envelopes will be in the pews next Sunday to allow you to participate should you choose to do so.

**Winter parishioners.** We welcome all our winter parishioners. I know that many of you are registered and play an active part in our parish life 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 the larger church that you belong to. 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 "Fr Sean". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.