



Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time
February 9, 2014 A

Annual Catholic Appeal
Next Weekend

Next weekend is Catholic Appeal Sunday in the 90+ parishes and missions in our nine-county diocese. If you attend Mass on a regular basis 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. Overseeing the life of 90+ parishes is a big job. It requires many skilled personnel.

Our assessment. Our assessment this year is \$320,361.

Large parishes (with income between one and two million dollars) are assessed 20% of their income. Looking at our income this year and the amount of money we will give the school (which is a deduction to our assessment), this year our assessment went up by \$31,596, that is, 11% due to an increase in our offertory income in the previous fiscal year.

Seven levels of giving in 2013

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 \$50 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.

- Last year we received 3 gifts of \$5,000
- 7 families pledged between \$2,500 and \$4,900, totaling \$18,880
- 9 families pledged between \$2,000 and \$2,499, totaling \$18,496.
- 59 families pledged between \$1,000 and \$2,000, totaling \$70,817
- 114 parishioners pledged between \$500 and \$999, totaling \$71,031.
- 277 parishioners pledged between \$200 and \$499, totaling \$82,452.
- 225 parishioners pledged between \$100 and \$199, totaling \$25,840
- 237 parishioners pledged under \$100, totaling \$8,549

All levels of giving are welcome and appreciated. I only ask that you be as generous as you can. Reaching our goal this year is going to mean *extra generosity* on all of us. As stated earlier, our assessment this year is up 11%. If in a position to increase your gift from last year by 11%, *please* consider doing so. I can with reasonable certainty say that an increase in our assessment next year, if any, will be very little.

FIVE REASONS TO FINANCIALLY SUPPORT YOUR CHURCH AT THE PARISH AND DIOCESAN LEVEL

1. Sharing a generous portion of our financial resources with our church family is the most concrete way to say ‘Thank You’ to God who has blessed us spiritually and materially. While it is indeed a good practice to verbally express our thanks by frequently *saying* “Thank You,” we all know that actually sharing a portion of our material resources to further the mission of the Church is a much more concrete way to say “Thank You, Lord, for your blessings.”

2. Developing a spirit of generosity makes us more like our good and generous God, just as developing a forgiving spirit makes us more like our forgiving God. While a spirit of generosity includes time and talent and many other things, financial generosity is also important if we are to develop a generous spirit. Why do I say that? Because a selfish spirit is a huge block to developing a strong spiritual life. The only way to combat selfishness is through regular and faithful sharing of our financial resources.

3. We could have been born in the slums of a very poor country. When we look at the global world that we live in where so many go hungry daily, we are very blessed indeed. I think it’s safe to say that God expects us to share our blessing with the less fortunate and with our church family.

4. Part of being a good Catholic is supporting the wider church family we belong to.

5. Generosity is one key to a happy life. People who have developed a generous spirit are usually happy people.

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.

As I said in my letter you received in the mail this past week, each year I wonder if we are going to reach our goal—but each year the majority of you step up to the plate to show me once again what a generous parish we have at Ascension. Thank you a thousand times over!

Stewardship Prayer

Dear Lord,

*Thank you for teaching me to be generous
as you have been generous with me.*

*Thank you for showing me that all I am and
have are gift from you.*

*And that these gifts from you, Lord, are
meant to be shared.*

Show me the joys of generosity.

*Help me to understand that others, perhaps
unknown to me, depend on me for help.*

*Remind me that my world, my parish, needs
“Good Samaritans” to heal the wounds
of our time.*

Make me a gift to others in your name.

Amen.

Have a blessed week,

