

Annual Catholic Appeal 2017

I would like to begin my remarks this evening (morning) regarding the 2017 Annual Catholic Appeal by talking about how generous the parishioners of St. Mary of the Lakes were to the 2016 Annual Catholic Appeal. Last year, we had a banner year. While our goal was and is \$139,600, last year we raised, not pledged, but raised \$176,070. Since we increased our participation by at least 10 percent, we received an additional \$7,000 in rebate for a total rebate of \$19,250. So thank you for being so generous.

At the Annual Catholic Appeal meeting, one of the pastors said he has come across the argument made by parishioners to just make a gift to the parish, rather than to the Diocesan appeal. This way, the parish would receive the entire gift, rather than just a percentage of their gift via parish rebate, but the entire gift. The particular priest said he didn't know how to respond. I put my hand up, saying I'd like to respond.

And my response was St. Mary of the Lakes, and every other parish, I am quite sure, depends on diocesan support at just about every turn, which is why I make as generous a gift as I can to the appeal, and I will do whatever the Bishop asks

me to do to help the Diocese. The Bishop asked me to be pastor of St. Mary of the Lakes and I am. The Bishop asked me to serve on the Episcopal Council and I am. The Bishop asked me to be the assistant vocations director, and I am. My time, treasure and talent is at the service at St. Mary of the Lakes, but it is at the service of the Diocese as well. I was ordained a priest of the diocese, not any particular parish.

Also, as an aside, I listened to a series of 12 talks on St. Paul. Part of the series talked about the collection that was taken up by St. Paul from the Churches, and given to the Church in Jerusalem. So in a very real way, appeals for the benefit of the larger Church have been a part of the practice of the Catholic faith since the time of St. Paul.

Every priest, every deacon, every staff person, from business manager to Director of Religious Education to Youth Minister received their educational and ministerial training either at the diocese, or on the diocesan dime.

In additional to staff support, ministerial support as well.

The:

- ✓ Finance Council
- ✓ Parish Pastoral Council
- ✓ School Board

- ✓ Religious Education (PREP) Program
- ✓ Catechist Formation
- ✓ Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)
- ✓ Eucharistic Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC)
- ✓ Adult Faith Formation
- ✓ Pre Cana
- ✓ Respect Life Committee
- ✓ Bereavement Ministry
- ✓ Legion of Mary
- ✓ St. Vincent de Paul
- ✓ Ministers to the sick

All of these ministries here at St. Mary of the Lakes rely on the Diocese for their formation and further education.

If a parish did not make a gift to the diocesan appeal, it would be pharisaical to expect diocesan help. And by pharisaical, I refer to Matthew 23 which reads:

For they (the Pharisees) preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens (hard to carry) and lay them on people's shoulders, but do not lift a finger to move them.

In other words, if a parish turns to the diocese for help and support, especially as often as St. Mary of the Lakes does, and

then does not help carry the load with financial support, that's being pharisaical.

Earlier, I mentioned the parish rebate. Once a parish reaches its goal 15% of the goal is returned to St. Mary of the Lakes. And then after the goal is reached 50% of all gifts made over goal return to the parish.

This year, the diocese is offering a challenge to each parish to increase participation. Any parish that increased their participation by 10%, so in our case, if 75 families make a \$25 gift to the appeal who have not made a gift in past years, then we will realize an additional \$7,000. So if you have never made a gift to the appeal, this is the year to make a \$25 gift. You make a gift of \$25 and St. Mary of the Lakes will receive an additional \$7,000 rebate.

At this time, I'll ask you to direct your attention to the video.

SHOW VIDEO. LIGHTS. SOUND SYSTEM.

In your pew is this year's pledge form. Your name and address are to be completed on one side, and if you choose to pay via credit card and/or to be billed, please complete the other side. You will also notice that donations can be made on

line by logging into www.dioceseoftrenton.org/catholicappeal which is how I make my contribution each year.

USHERS, PLEASE COLLECT THE PLEDGE CARDS.

I also want to be clear. As you know, we are in the initial stages of our parish capital and building campaign, Our Family. Our Faith. Our Future. A part of the money raised for this campaign will be going to the diocese, not to fund current operating expenses, as does the Annual Catholic Appeal, but to establish an endowment fund to help grease the skids for a more secure financial future. So in the coming weeks and months, as you are asked to make a gift to OFOFOF, don't scratch your head and say, "Didn't we give to that in February?" The Annual Catholic Appeal is for now. OFOFOF is just that "our future," both for St. Mary of the Lakes and for the Diocese.

Thank you for your kind attention and for joining me in making a pledge to this year's Annual Catholic Appeal. Please leave the pencils on the chairs and not in the book racks.