

Pastor's Pen: Catholic Stewardship Appeal: Doing Our Part

In October of last year, the diocese began its annual Stewardship Appeal. We are coming to the end of it. I have taken for granted that most people know what this appeal is about. I was incorrect. What is it and what does it fund (or not fund).

How Dioceses Get Their Money

A diocese gets their money for running diocesan programs and ministries through three sources atypically: 1) Cathedraticum and Assessments, 2) Stewardship Appeals, and 3) other generous donors. Funds for tending to damages caused by abuse are raised independently by the bishop. No monies raised in the three other ways goes to paying off damages and lawsuits.

Cathedraticum and assessments: Individual parishes are expected to do their part in providing for the good of the entire diocese. There are multiple ministries (School office, Marriage Tribunal, Youth and Religious Education, and so on) that need to be funded. In our diocese, we have been blessed with bishops that were financial hawks. Cathedraticum is a monthly assessment that each parish pays to help fund the diocese as a whole. Additional assessments for the training of priests and the care of our retired priests appear as well at Christmas and Easter. Some particular offices (diaconate and school, for example) have individual assessments to cover part of the cost in services provided. The assessments are made in accordance with the income of a parish two years prior.

For some parishes, they are cash fluid enough that if they needed to pay the full part of their share, they could. For, most though (especially those with schools) the full share would be difficult.

Catholic Stewardship Appeal: To avoid placing the full costs on parishes, the diocese turns to the people of the diocese, both clergy and laity, to personally give to help fund the diocese and its mission. Each parish is given a goal to reach. For SS Peter and Paul that was \$28000 and for St Joseph that was \$5500; that is our part of the \$2,450,000 that the diocese was requesting. To this date, the people of our diocese have given \$2,600,000+, while SS Peter and Paul has fallen short by \$4800 and St. Joseph has fallen short by \$1100.

For what remains, the bishop looks to generous donors to make up the difference.

What do we use with the diocese? What benefits do we get?

Let us start with a local level.

The diocese is who assigns clergy to a parish.

For decades, the diocese has not charged for use of the Marriage Tribunal. If you got married to someone not-Catholic, had to get an annulment, has to have a prior marriage declared null, or anything else doing with marriage, the diocese has provided everything from documents to personnel free of charge. This is very unusual. Prior bishops never want money to be a reason a person stayed away from annulments.

Diocesan entities such as the Youth Office and the School Office have helped with youth and education on a regular basis. Our 35+ catholic schools have a superintendent like other school districts. The youth office comes up with multiple ways to engage our youth on the diocesan level. Other offices like the Chancellor, run the Protecting God's Children program, run communications, and put out our diocesan paper. What we ask for cost wise from families getting the Catholic Missourian does not remotely cover the costs.

I could go on and on, but hopefully you get the picture.

We benefit from the chancery. We should be doing our small role in supporting it. Attached to this column is an envelope. We need to meet our goal. The diocese doesn't come after us if we don't. It is not just, though, for us to ask for so much and then not do our part. You don't need to break the bank on this. Give something, please. If you have already given, thank you...I am not asking you to give anything more if you do not feel the need to do so. You have done your part.

Our bishop has some very big and great plans as to where to lead this diocese. Those plans incur costs and personnel just as they do in our parishes or any other enterprise. We are stronger when everyone pitches in. We are not like Protestants church-wise where we look only to the local community; we are Catholics, which means we look to the good of the whole Body of Christ. We are much bigger than the local congregation.

Thank you for your support