

This weekend is the commitment weekend for the Annual Archdiocese Catholic Appeal; it was supposed to happen a couple of weeks ago but the archbishop postponed it due to the death of Pope Francis. Materials are at the ends of the pews; some of you already received them in the mail. You can fill them out now if you are ready or you can take them home and bring them back next weekend. Whichever you choose to do, please put them in the main collection basket; we won't take up a separate second collection for this. You can also mail them directly back to the archdiocese; just make sure Our Lady of the Mountain is listed as the parish so your pledge gets credited to our fundraising goal.

What is our fundraising goal? \$38,000. That sounds like a lot but if everybody gave a little bit, we'd easily meet the goal. Last year we were one of the first parishes to meet our goal. If that happens again this year, this is the last time I will mention it. If not, I'll have to repeat this over and over again until we do meet the goal.

There are a number of different options for pledging and paying. I find it easier to donate every month with an automatic online payment. I give \$50 dollars every month (\$600/year); that's what I do, you should do whatever best fits your budget. I'm telling you this so you know that I consider it important and I am not asking you to do something that I am not willing to do myself. This appeal provides support for Catholic schools. It supports the formation of seminarians who are our future priests. It supports senior priests who have already given their lives in service to the church—we have a duty to care for them after they have given their lives to care for us. More specific information can be found through the link on our parish website or the website listed on the appeal envelopes.

The mission of the church—helping all people to have an encounter with Jesus—isn't something that just happens; it requires concrete actions. Luke's gospel tells us about the women who worked and gave money to support Jesus' ministry. The Acts of the Apostles also gives us descriptions of the concrete realities involved in spreading the gospel; for example, the institution of the diaconate to help the apostles with the day to day activities of caring for God's people. Paul's letters speak of how the various communities supported both himself and their neighbors. The ancient church understood the need for concrete actions. We have lost some of that sense and many people are content to let someone else take care of it. Last weekend, I shared a quote from Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* which said: "We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world."

We need each other and we need everybody to be involved in the mission of the church, whether it through service to our local parishes or by supporting the parish and the wider church through financial means. You guys are very generous. Last year we actually exceeded our campaign goal. Thank you for that, but we cannot stop now. Our mission of introducing people to Jesus is ongoing and we need your support. On behalf of Archbishop Sample, thank you for your generosity.

As you all know by now, unless you have been living in a cave, we have a new Pope, Leo XIV, from Chicago, the first pope from the United States. The election of a new pope is always a reason for rejoicing. It is also a good time to put things into perspective. Leo is going to be faced with a bunch of challenges from within and outside of the church. He is going to see them and try to shepherd us through them at the global level. He needs our prayers to do this, but he needs more than prayers; he needs our active cooperation and help. We do not act at the global level (the big picture); we act at the micro-level (the smaller picture, in the details). For example: the previous three popes addressed the degradation of the environment in a broad way. We act by picking up trash, by reducing our use of plastic bottles, by being more responsible in how we use natural resources. Pope Francis taught in a broad way about going out to the margins. We act through the SVDP society or the PBJ ministry, by visiting the sick and elderly, by reaching out to our neighbors who are lonely and isolated. All of the modern popes have worked for world peace. We act with regard to world peace by treating all people—regardless of faith, race, culture, gender, sexuality, political ideology, liturgical preference, whatever else we divide each other by—as persons created in the image and likeness of God and giving them the respect due to them.

Pope Leo XIV is going to address injustices in the world through teaching and by trying to guide us in the right course; he brings them to our attention. How are we going to respond to those injustices in our own small but concrete ways? Are we aware of how we contribute to, participate in, or tolerate injustices? The election of a pope is a reason to rejoice, so by all means rejoice! At the same time, we have to ask ourselves, “How am I going to help Pope Leo in his ministry? How am I going to help spread Jesus’ gospel right here and now?”