

## *2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Today is pledge Sunday for our annual parish appeal, and I'd like to thank everyone again for the financial support that you give St. Anthony's. We are making pledge cards available to you, and asking you to fill them out today. The card will tell us your best guess for how much you will be able to contribute in the weekly collection. This pledge card works together with the parish envelopes that you receive in the mail. The cards help us plan what our weekly collection will be this coming year. They will also help you set a goal for your giving.

Giving is part of the spiritual tradition in many religions. The Old Testament recommends giving a tithe, or ten percent. The ancient Israelites were supposed to give ten percent of their crops and livestock to the temple. Many Christian churches have adopted the tithe as a goal for giving. In our diocese, we understand that people may want to support a variety of charities, so we encourage everyone to tithe by giving half of it - five percent - the parish, and the other half to other worthy causes.

Five percent is the goal. Some people can give more, and some can give less. On the back of your pledge card, you'll see a table showing how much five percent is for you. Once you think about how much money you typically make in a year, you can see a goal for your weekly or monthly contributions. We also show a three percent goal for those who think that five percent is more than they can do right now. Looking at a chart and thinking about your income each year helps you examine your gift. It will affirm you when your gift is strong and challenge you when your gift is weak. When I fill out a parish pledge card, I increase my gift every year, even if it's a small amount. I want the feeling that I'm trying to give back a little more for all the blessings that God has given me.

Your spirit of sacrifice is one trait that makes this parish so beautiful. Your gift does more than pay bills. It makes us a better community. Individually we become more ready to help others, and collectively we draw support and inspiration from one another. Generosity is one of the spiritual gifts that holds us together. It's a shared value that explains why some of your best friends are probably the people you see in church.

St. Paul tells the Corinthians about spiritual gifts. These are manifestations of God's generosity to us. Some people have knowledge, others faith, others have gifts of healing, some perform mighty deeds, some prophesy, some discern spirits, some speak in tongues and others interpret tongues. There are many gifts, Paul says, but one Spirit who is behind them all. According to Paul, we already have unity because one Spirit has endowed us in so many different ways.

When we exercise these gifts, we bring life to the body of Christ. Some people are jealous of the gifts that others have, but we should really rejoice in their gifts. The Spirit blesses different people not to make us envious, but so that all of us can contribute to the common good. Together we will accomplish what a few of us could never do.

I want to thank you all again for the many ways that you offer gifts to St. Anthony Catholic Church. Your contributions are a testimony to the faith you have in God, who has given you all that you have.

Sunday, January 17, 2016