

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exactly 25 years ago this week Bishop John Sullivan reconfigured the parishes of the Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph. St. Augustine church at 79th and the Paseo became the Church of the Holy Martyrs, a place for Vietnamese Catholics. The parishes of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Sacred Heart merged. Here in the northeast three parishes merged: St. Francis Seraph, St. John the Baptist and the Assumption. The other two buildings closed and this one changed its name to St. Anthony Catholic Church. Some people no longer worshiped in the place they called home, but stronger Catholic parishes grew.

Each parish relies on the wisdom of a bishop and diocesan offices. Each year every Catholic is asked to donate to the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, in addition to the gift we make to our parishes. This contribution sustains the diocesan office of Hispanic Ministry and Catholic Charities, which helps the poor, the heartbroken, and those released from prisons. This appeal helps staff parishes that cannot afford personnel; St. Anthony's receives \$833 a month from this fund. It supports Catholic education, such as Holy Cross School. It funds the Bishop Helmsing Institute, which educates people in English and in Spanish. It provides a vocation office to recruit and support seminarians, such as our friend Fr. Luis Felipe Suárez; and the diaconate program for men like our own Deacon Tom. It helps the Office of Priestly Life and Ministry, which provides continuing education and spiritual formation for priests like me; as well as campus ministry for the youth of our parishes. It supports the offices of youth ministry, human rights, and respect life. Members of St. Anthony Parish directly benefit from the diocesan Annual Catholic Appeal.

Bishop James Johnston opened this appeal last fall. A couple of years ago many of you pledged to the capital campaign Forward in Faith, which is building a new diocesan high school. The Annual Catholic Appeal covers needs that arise every year. As part of your tithe, we recommend 5% to the parish and 1% to the diocese.

By the way, your response to the parish appeal this year has been great. Two years ago we received 44 pledges totaling about \$62,000. Last year we received 52 pledges for almost \$66,000. This year - so far - we have received 62 pledges for \$75,000. You love and support your parish. You believe in giving.

Our most important belief is in the resurrection, as St. Paul says in today's second reading. We believe "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures;" and that he appeared to Peter, to 500 believers at once, and then James and to the apostles. He also appeared to Paul. Christ has appeared to each of us in the sacraments and in our Catholic faith.

I invite you today, please, make a pledge to the Annual Catholic Appeal of the Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph. You may have received a pledge card in the mail. We also have envelopes and pencils in your pew today. Show God your faith in the resurrection and your faith in his goodness. You will support the work of those who help strengthen parishes like St. Anthony Catholic Church.