

*3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time*

I'd like to thank all of you who have filled out parish pledge cards for the Sunday collection this coming year. The numbers you place on your card reaffirm your membership. They give us an idea of the income we can expect. They also mean that you have been thinking about the gift you make to St. Anthony's, and that you are challenging yourself to support the church faithfully. We have extra pledge cards here if you would like to turn one in today.

In a parish like ours, it is especially helpful for us to know the people who consider themselves members. Traditionally, Catholic parishes have geographical boundaries, and priests take care of the people who live inside them. Today many people travel across boundaries to the parish of their choice. Many of our members live outside our boundaries, and I'm glad they come here. These include people who used to live in our neighborhood, as well as people who just love to worship here. They also include Spanish-speakers because our diocese has only eight parishes with services in Spanish.

We pastors are especially grateful to people who commit to one parish, instead of moving around from week to week. When we have a stable membership, we can more easily form a community of people who love, serve and share faith together. A stable membership also usually brings stable finances. When you choose one parish, it is easier for us to serve you.

We send contribution envelopes to nearly every one of our registered members. If you do not receive envelopes, you are probably not registered with us. To register, you fill out the form in the back of church or on our web site. Some people think they are registered if they used to belong to St. Aloysius before it merged with St. Anthony's, if they received a sacrament here in the past, or if someone in their family had a funeral here. But frequently we discover we don't have your name. We also encourage young people to fill out their own registration form once they graduate from high school.

Registered members receive many benefits: We offer you preparation and celebration for events such as baptisms, presentations of a three-year old, quinceañeras, weddings and funerals. You may be eligible for emergency financial assistance through the Father John Hix Fund at the Bishop Sullivan Center. You may rent the hall. You may receive letters of recommendation to become godparents or sponsors, to enroll in a school, get a job, or help establish your residency in the United States. The letter you receive will be more effective if we can say that for several years you have been an active, contributing member of St. Anthony Catholic Church.

In today's first reading the prophet Isaiah rejoiced at God's wonders: "Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness: for there is no gloom where but now there was distress. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone." We Christians believe that that prophecy was fulfilled in the coming of Christ. It is fulfilled again each Sunday here at St. Anthony's, where people share their treasures to brighten the world. Thank you for supporting our parish and spreading the light of Christ.

**Sunday, January 22, 2017**