

At St. Anthony's this weekend our Vietnamese community is celebrating Tet, the new year. Our hispanic community is preparing tamales for next Sunday's observance of *Candelaria*. Our refugee families from Central Africa are wearing new clothes donated by members of *Alliance Française*. And our Italian families are baking cookies in preparation for the St. Joseph Table. We are blessed that so many people find their homes here. Multiculturalism stretches us, but it also helps us appreciate our beautiful world.

Thank you, one and all, for supporting St. Anthony's with your contributions each week, and a special thanks to those who have turned in a pledge card for the coming year. Each year the diocesan finance office asks each parish to submit a budget. When we receive your pledge cards, we can make better plans. Pledges also challenge you to be faithful in support of your church

You may now give to St. Anthony's online. If you sign up with a credit or debit card, you can ensure that you make your gift to the parish every week or every month, even if you cannot be here for mass. To set up an online donation, go to our web site, 309benton.com, click on the donate button, and follow the simple instructions.

We receive a lot of loose cash in the collection each Sunday, especially at the Spanish-language masses. We are grateful for every gift, but I want to encourage those who put cash in the collection to use envelopes. Your envelopes will provide a record of your contributions. They let us know that you care about the parish. We can provide you with an annual report that you may use to reduce your taxes each year.

Some people are still making change in the collection, a practice that I think is dangerous. Some people put a large bill in the basket and help themselves to smaller bills. The diocesan finance office has strict rules about the collection. We have to designate authorized individuals to count the money each week. They must follow rules. They count in groups; they can never be alone with the collection. When people in the pews make change in the collection basket on Sundays, or when they ask ushers to do it, we are in danger of mistakes, which places the cash at risk. I beg you, please do not make change in the collection. Before you leave home, think about the gift you want to make. Put it in your envelope. Seal your envelope. And put your envelope in the collection. This protects your gift, and it respects the gifts that others have made.

We have pledge cards available in the back of church. If you have not yet completed one, please do so today. Challenge yourself to sacrifice a little more each year. God has been good to you; show your gratitude. The prophet Zephaniah says in today's first reading, "Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth, who have observed his law; seek justice, seek humility." When we humbly return to God a portion of the blessings we have received, in this beautiful multicultural community that is St. Anthony's, we promote the justice that the prophets have proclaimed. Thank you for your contributions. May God reward you with even more blessings for your generosity to St. Anthony Catholic Church.