

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Thank you all for supporting the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Since arriving here last summer, I've been moved by the generous hearts of our members and visitors alike. It takes a large number of volunteers to operate a parish this size; our staff cannot do it alone. It takes many dollars to fund the services we offer; our members cannot do it alone. We have our challenges: We cannot pay our bills every month. We are still servicing the debt from the renovation of the building, about \$300,000. But our financial goals are reachable. I'm still new here, but I am totally optimistic about our future. I believe we have the membership, the donors and the goodwill to make good on our debts and to expand the volunteers who assist us in ministry.

The stewardship council and I have selected this weekend to launch an annual pledge appeal. Ushers distributed pledge forms as you entered the building today. If you did not receive one, please pick one up after mass. Tell us what you think you can give in 2018. You will help our finance council make its budget. You will set a personal goal. And you will respond to the call of God to use your gifts for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Beyond pledging your financial offering, we hope that you will also pledge your spiritual life and service to others. We are challenging you to devote 20 minutes to prayer each day and 20 hours of service throughout the coming year. We're hoping you'll give the cathedral a minimum of \$20 a week. Some can only give less, some can give more. We hope you'll embrace the 20/20/20 challenge to prayer, finances and service, and show your support for the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

For our visitors, we love having you here. We are grateful for your coming and honored that you choose to worship with us. One reason we are here is to serve you. When I am a visitor at other churches on a Sunday, I like to put a \$20 gift in the collection. I know from my ministry that that parish can probably use it. They often do not know who I am; they cannot send me a thank-you note. But I feel good making a gift. Whatever you can give us, please know that we receive it with gratitude, and we put your contribution to work in all the ways we respond to the call of God.

Today's readings have much to do about that call. In the gospel Jesus invites disciples to follow him. In the first reading God calls Samuel. In the psalm, we sing, "Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will." As Psalm 40 says, God does not merely want "slaughtered goats or lambs." God wants something more: God wants you. God wants your heart. We believe that God has a will for you, that God created you with certain gifts, and that God is calling you to use those gifts for others.

You can tell us about your service when you update your membership record. If you give us an email address, we'll send you a link to complete your contact information - and to get involved. We need ushers and greeters, servers at the altar, readers and communion ministers, sales people in the gift shop, and catechists to teach religious education for youth. Yes, we need your financial offerings to keep the cathedral afloat, but we want something more. We want you. Thank you for your generous support and for the witness you give us when you make this response to God's call: "Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will."

Sunday, January 14, 2018