

Pope Benedict XVI will visit the United States this week to carry the message of Christ to members of our Church and to all people of good will. This will be an exciting week, but an expensive one. Delegations from all over the country will go to Washington and New York to take part in large outdoor celebrations of the eucharist. Security for the pope will be difficult but necessary. It is costly for the pope to travel, but people are willing to sacrifice because his presence and his message are so important to us. We believe God will reward the sacrifices we make. The First Letter of Saint Peter today says, "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps. If you are patient when you suffer, this is a grace before God."

Next Sunday is Pledge Sunday for our annual appeal at St. Munchin and St. Aloysius. You may have already received your bright yellow pledge card. This is the appeal for our weekly collection; I will be making a separate appeal next month for the debt on our construction. The building is coming along beautifully, and we hope to be back over there in 3 weeks. I will need your help paying off that debt, and there's a lot of excitement already about our renovated space, but first I need to remind you about the importance of our weekly collection that pays for everything else: salaries, water, power, phones – all the things that make this a good home for worship, religious education, service, and community life.

A year ago, you pledged \$94,000 to St. Munchin for the weekly collection and you have contributed \$135,000 so far. You also pledged \$15,000 to St. Al's, and you have contributed \$18,000 so far. Some people do not pledge, but they give; we project those potential gifts into our annual budget. Thank you all for your support. We couldn't do it without you. However, due to the heat bills from a harsh winter in Cameron, and new gravel and plumbing repairs in Maysville, we are operating a bit in the red. The finance council anticipated some of this, and they are not overly concerned; we are using some of the funds that we've had on reserve; that's what they're for. Considering the building campaigns and the economy, you are giving a lot to your parish right now; we understand that and appreciate it. We expect our giving and our expenditures will straighten themselves out in the near future.

Still, it would be nice to go into the next fiscal year on July 1 with a higher pledge from our members. When I pledge, I challenge myself to increase my gift from year to year, and I make sure that I'm contributing at least 5% of my income to my parish. The back of your pledge card gives a chart to help you figure your payments.

A pledge really helps us. We have to submit a budget to the bishop each year, and your pledge cards make our estimates more accurate. So, please, when you receive your card, give it some prayerful consideration, and fill it out as if you were making a purchase that is important to you, a purchase you are willing to sacrifice for. Remember the example of Christ. He thought you were a purchase worth sacrificing for. And he will reward the generous gifts you make each week to your church.