

I'd like to thank those who have already contributed to the Bishop's Annual Appeal. I'm grateful to those who helped lead the campaign this year from the parish and from the chancery.

This is the last formal weekend of the campaign, and that's why you received an envelope when you came in today. If you have not made a pledge yet, or have misplaced your envelope, please fill out the one you received today, so that you can still take part in the campaign. You may hand the completed form back to a member of our youth group on the way out of church today.

The campaign supports many important efforts from the training of seminarians to the retirement of priests; from helping poor kids of the central city who would like a Catholic education to rescuing the unemployed through Catholic Charities. Every Catholic in the diocese is asked to make some gift toward the campaign, in order to express the unity of our faith and the acceptance of our responsibility for one another. At St. Munchin we are about \$2000 shy of our goal; at St. Aloysius we are \$100 short of the goal. Your gift this weekend could put us over the top. Everybody has important personal matters to deal with, but this is one of those occasions when we see the big picture: we look around the region to help our neighbor. As we have each benefited from the generosity of others, so we show generosity to those in need.

As Jesus neared the end of his life, he tried to get his disciples to see the big picture as well. In Mark's gospel, he warns that the situation will be bleak. The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and stars will fall from the sky. At the end of time, the Son of Man will come to gather his elect from the four winds. We'd like to be among those elect. But we all get careless from time to time, taking for granted the blessings of life, and forgetting how quickly everything can change. Jesus says no one knows the day or the hour when the Son of Man will come, but we need to be alert for his coming and prepared to welcome him, so that when we die, he will welcome us to eternal glory.

No one likes to think about dying, but many people who have suffered a near death experience say it really helped them reorganize priorities. They learned what really mattered. Some of the seemingly huge issues we face today are not that big when we think about the whole of our life. At times we get concerned about the wrong things. However the big picture is revealed to us, it is helpful to see it – knowing that people have inadequate food and water in Tanzania makes our struggles seem small; knowing that people are losing their jobs here in our diocese makes us grateful for what we have. Anytime we reach out to help our neighbor, we see our own struggles in a new light. We feel more grateful for what we have, and more satisfied that we can make a difference. So let us be mindful of the blessings God has given us, and share what we have with those who have less, that the Son of Man may recognize us among his elect when he comes again in glory.