

For the past few weeks you've heard us make presentations about the Bishop's Annual Appeal. Today is commitment Sunday, and I'd like to add my voice to this effort. This is the same collection that we used to call Together We Can. Before that it was known as the United Catholic Stewardship Appeal. We ask for pledges every year to support the various ministries of our diocese. A while back the diocese conducted a multiple-year capital campaign to renovate our cathedral, improve our schools, and tend other needs. That was called Gift of Faith, but the Bishop's Annual Appeal is just what it says: an appeal made each year by our bishop for the needs of our diocese.

We are 1 of 99 parishes in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, serving over 136,000 Catholics in 27 counties. Each one of us cannot be the one to comfort the grieving, feed the hungry, teach the young, and minister to those in need, but we can do it through our generosity. Our gifts continue to educate and support men and women entering religious life, provide tools to help strengthen marriages and family life, keep young people active and engaged in their faith, and care for the elderly, the grieving and the poor. Every dollar raised goes directly to Church ministry and programs.

Just last week I was able to visit Phil Luebbert at Holy Apostles Seminary in Cromwell, Connecticut. Phil is a member of St. Munchin, he used to stock fruits and vegetables at the local Wal\*Mart, and he helped us as a lector, usher, communion minister and lay leader of prayer. Phil seems like a new man since entering the seminary. He and our other seminarians benefit from this appeal.

As a parish we have received the assistance of many diocesan offices this year, especially those advising us on the construction and renovation of our building.

Many of you received a pledge card and information on the appeal in the mail. I'd like to thank those who have already responded. If you still need a card, you'll find one in the pew today. Our goal is to raise \$8000/\$778 (St. Munchin/St. Aloysius). If we exceed that amount, 50% of the surplus comes right back to us, helping us improve our facilities, reduce our debt, provide religious education for children, and offer you the sacraments of our church.

It is a special blessing to make this appeal on the day that the lectionary gives us the story of the ten lepers. Jesus healed them all, but only one took the time to thank him. As Catholics we have all experienced healing in our lives: the forgiveness of our sins, the miraculous cure of someone we loved, the joy of friendship in a time of great need, the proclamation of the word of God in a way that gave us new insights, and support when the tragedies of life made it seem hard to pick up and go forward another day. God has blessed us. Jesus has healed us. He looks for those who will say thanks.

Our church recommends tithing. Give 10% of your income to charity: 5% percent to the parish, 4% to other charities, and 1% to the diocese in the Bishop's Annual Appeal. Here is your chance to glorify God in a loud voice for the healing you have received, to fall at the feet of Jesus and thank him. Let's give this year with a thankful heart for all that God has done for us.