

One sunny day last October I walked into the secretary's office at the Center for Pastoral Liturgy on the twelfth floor of the Hesburgh Library at Notre Dame. Even though I was there to study liturgy, that particular day she asked me my expert opinion about a very different matter. She wanted to know what I thought of the two teams who had just won the league championship series, the New York Yankees and the San Diego Padres. You see, when I first met her in August, she learned that I had spent several nights already at Coveleski Stadium watching the South Bend Silver Hawks, a minor league baseball franchise of the Arizona Diamondbacks, and I learned that she was married to man who operates one of these baseball fantasy leagues, you know where you buy players for 5, 10, \$20 each, make up your own team and play other teams based on statistical performance. I told her on that first day, "I don't even want to meet your husband;" I don't want to meet someone who follows baseball statistics that closely. On this particular October day it had just been decided who was going into the World Series and she wanted to know what I thought. I said, "I'm just glad Atlanta lost; I hate Atlanta." She looked puzzled and asked, "Why do you hate Atlanta?" I said, "They're rich and they're smug." She said, "You're standing on the campus of the University of Notre Dame and you're complaining about an athletic organization that is rich and smug?"

Here at St. Regis we've been called a lot of things, but nobody has ever called us rich and smug. We barely get by year after year. A lot of parishes have a handful of donors who make large contributions, and everybody else does what they can but it's really a few who make a difference. At St. Regis, that is not the case. Here we depend on everyone's gift. I want you to know how much I appreciate your contributions to this parish. You give freely and lovingly; you trust us with the education of your children; you join us in prayer, in service, and in fun. When you drop your envelope in the basket you present your heart, your labor, and your sacrifice to God. You know that God rewards you; your envelope is an expression of your faith. I thank you, not just for the contribution, but for the witness of your faith that it represents.

As we conduct our annual campaign for the weekly offering at St. Regis, I want to remind you what your parish stands for. Our primary purpose here is to celebrate the eucharist every Saturday night and Sunday morning. We have three other reasons for being here: education, service, and community. But our main purpose is the mass. Our specific mission is to serve the religious needs of Catholics in this southeast corner of the metro area. The issues we face include dismantling racism, offering religious education for children, promoting the value of human life, and building bridges to the hungry in America and the poor in El Salvador. The love in this community is so intense that it spills out within and outside our borders wherever it can bring the light of Christ.

Our needs for next year are increasing. I'd like to raise salaries for our teachers. I'd like to provide our employees with materials to do their work effectively. We need to be prepared to replace equipment now more than thirty years old. We'd like to pay the interest on our loan out of ordinary income. We can do none of that next year without an increase in

our weekly offering. I am appealing to you to help us meet a challenging year ahead. You are part of a community with high ideals; we need your support to live them.

I still believe the best way to gauge our offering is the tithe. "Tithe" comes from a word meaning "tenth," and it represents 10% of our income. Throughout our diocese we urge Catholics to give half their tithe to their parish. As the saying goes, "Your parish is fit to be tithed." I ask you to check your income on your 1040 and make your total annual gift to St. Regis 5% of that figure. If you need help doing the math, we'll be there.

I would like to make a special appeal to our youth. When I was in high school and college, I didn't give much thought to tithing to my parish. Today our high school and college students and our young adults are earning a wage, and many are paying taxes on what they earn. My young brothers and sisters, I'm asking you to tithe. I'm asking you who share in the benefits of a Catholic parish to accept responsibility for the community as well. Many of you are already involved in our youth group, our liturgy, and even our councils. I'd like you to make a financial pledge to your parish this year, 5% of your wages from work. If you do, you'll discover what others have found: God will reward you even more, your heart will be inclined to charity, you will feel more deeply the love of this community, and your faith will catch fire.

When St. Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, he addressed a community known for fancy talkers. Paul says in the excerpt we hear today, "I'm not gonna talk fancy to you; just gonna say a simple message: Jesus Christ was crucified for us." He said, "I don't want you to believe because of some clever words; I want you to believe because of the power of God." I feel the same way. Tithing should be a no-brainer. God has been infinitely good to us. The eucharist we share here is the greatest gift in the world; what else could we possibly want? What could we support with our income which would be greater than this meal? Please bring your pledge card next weekend, filled out at least to 5%. You may do more. Let it be an expression of your belief, and experience the power of God.