

Thirty years ago Bishop Charles Helmsing named this parish for St. John Francis Regis, who walked the mountains of southern France and brought the Gospel to out of the way places. Our parish was itself an out of the way place in 1964. St. Regis found us, inspired us, and prods us on to the Gospel. We have bloomed into the parish Bishop Helmsing could only dream we'd become.

To finance this parish requires the gifts of our people. We're not a parish with a few large givers and everyone else tagging along. We're a lot of good givers doing our part. It's not like three gifts, one church, but many gifts, one church.

We use many ways to raise money for St. Regis. We take a collection every weekend. We charge non-parishioners tuition for our school. We charge for our childcare center. We host fund-raising activities. We have opened a building fund and a school endowment fund. We take up second collections, like today's for the hungry in our area. We support the diocesan appeal, the UCSA, every May. We auction, we raffle, we charge fees, but most of all we beg. We ask, like children at Christmas, "Would you give us a gift? Would you give us a big gift?"

We keep our expenses down--we're among the best at that. Your contributions have risen every year, but at a slower rate than our expenses. Currently we have crossed into the red. We have never ended a fiscal year unable to pay our monthly bills, but this may be the year.

Money you have pledged for the building will go for the building. It's like the school endowment fund. We simply must plan for the future at the same time we're facing the present. We're short of our building fund goal; we cannot do the whole project right now. We're working on a plan that will be meaningful, beautiful, and affordable. As in the past, we'll ask for your comments before we proceed.

Are we biting off too much? No, if we don't plan for the future we'll regret this. Why didn't we have these problems in the past? We did have problems in the past. People gave generously, and we paid our bills, but we never aggressively ~~built~~ ^{saved} for the future. In Catholic education, for example, right now we are paying the bills of three generations: our generation, by our regular contributions; the next generation, by the endowment we're building; and the last generation, by offering retirement and health benefits to the sisters who received none, and by fixing up buildings we couldn't afford to repair. We're paying for the past, the present, and the future. We're thirty years old, and thirty years behind in building endowments.

There's a lot you can do to help. Pledge weekend next week represents the gift you regularly offer in the collection. An increase in your pledge may rescue us from entering into debt sooner than we intended. ^{at least once a year} We promote tithing. Here's how it works: Look at your 1040. Find your annual income. Figure out 5%. That's the recommended contribution to the parish. When you add on 1% to the diocese and 4% to other charities, you've reached 10% in contributions. That's a tithe. Promise me in the spirit of Lent that you'll go home and do this one arithmetic problem. Multiply your annual income by 5% and see how close your annual gift to the parish is to that figure. In the spirit

of Lent you may find something you can do without to give the needy a little more. Sacrificing is like exercising. Do it regularly and it will build your heart. If tithing is beyond your reach, see if you can give 10% over what you gave last year.

I also invite your creativity. Consider other means of giving: Remembering St. Regis in your will will help us more than you can imagine. Donating stocks and securities in the past few months has already eased taxes for many parishioners. Do you have property you're not using? Insurance policies you've forgotten about? Be creative. You can help us.

I don't know how many people have told me, "Father, if I win the lottery, I'm gonna build that church for you." Thank you, but I have another idea. For every dollar you spend on the lottery, give an extra dollar to the church. Odds are St. Regis will win more, and you'll develop the virtue of generosity which will benefit how you feel every day of your life. Cheaper than Prozac. Of course, if you do win the lottery, we'll talk.

I remain optimistic, because I've seen how much you love this parish. I so enjoy being with you. Love inspires giving. Love is giving without expecting return. You can have all the sales, raffles, and fund raisers you want, but what's most important is the gift that expects nothing. If you need an example, remember Good Friday. A gift of love can change the world, and I know it can build St. Regis.

L2 Regis 26-27.ii.94