

## “BEYOND THESE STONE WALLS” RETURNING OUR GIFTS WITH GRATITUDE

As the snowy/slushy mixture fell in the hours both preceding and during Christmas of 2009, one thought kept entering my mind— “This snowstorm is going to kill our collection!” Yes, it was quite selfish of me then, but I cannot deny that the thought crossed my mind. There is a tendency in each of us, I suspect, to draw inwardly, considering most everything from the rubric of how it will directly affect us. The mandate of the Church is so much broader than that. The Precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph # 2041) The traditional fifth precept (“**You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church**”) means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability.

Many parishes experience a phenomenon in which the sacrifices of time, talent and treasure of 20% of the parishioners effectively “subsidize” the remaining 80% of the parishioners. The same could be said for our Archdiocese. While we honor people’s commitment, it often strikes us as being “unfair” at its root. Shared sacrifice deepens our *communion* with one another in this Archdiocese. The parishes of this Archdiocese are vastly different in terms of demographics, median incomes and several other factors. Yet, each of us is able to contribute to the good of the local Church without prejudice to these differences. Parish ecclesiology and mission does not differ in substance from diocesan ecclesiology and mission; this is precisely why we are **not** Congregationalists. This parish has been exemplary in its support both of the local Church through the **Catholic Services Appeal (CSA)** and the universal Church by means of the Good Friday and Peter’s Pence collections, for which I am so grateful.

What is needed is a willing spirit that sees an equal responsibility towards the local Church as to our local parish. If we know that each parish is striving to promote healthy stewardship beyond the parish level, our collective sense of responsibility will be enhanced. In light of the many challenges to the Church from outside of ourselves, we must draw closer together in support of one another and in support of the priorities of our local Church, supporting the leadership of our new Archbishop. A gift from each of us individually is but one way in which we can do this.

Seventeen ministries are being supported and this year, the CSA will begin offering 400 need-based scholarships to Catholic grade schools, supplementing the great work of the Aim Higher Foundation. Our Archdiocese has sponsored a Mission in Venezuela since 1970. One of our own priests, Fr. Greg Schaeffer, is currently administering the **Diocese of Ciudad Guayana** as they await a new bishop. That is the esteem in which he is held by the local clergy! Our **Newman Center** at the University of Minnesota has grown exponentially in the past several years and offers solid programming at a critical time in people’s lives. Its fruit may also be seen in the area of vocations, and our **two seminaries** have maintained healthy enrollments, a sign of hope.

**Saint Ignatius of Antioch**, one of the “Apostolic Fathers” at the turn of the second century, wrote beautifully of the relationship that exists between priests (collectively referred to as a presbytery) and their bishop. While written for priests, may it also serve as a fruitful passage for our own prayer and reflection as we strive to build up the Body of Christ here in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis: “It is fitting that you should concur with the will of your Bishop, which you also do. For your justly renowned presbytery, worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the Bishop as the strings are to the harp. Therefore, in your concord and harmonious love, Jesus Christ is sung. And man by man, you become a choir, that being harmonious in love and taking up the song of God in unison you may with one voice sing to the Father...” (*Letter to the Ephesians*, 4:1-2).

Last weekend at all our Masses, we listened to a brief audio message introducing the Catholic Services Appeal. I encouraged you to prayerfully consider your support. Every diocese in the country invites its members to support the efforts of the Church beyond the parish. Why? It is all about **ecclesiology**— namely, that the Church at the local level is not the parish, but in fact the Archdiocese. We especially are aware of that in this parish. Your prayerful support of the Catholic Services Appeal is an equally important sign of our communion with **Archbishop Hebda**, with our Archdiocese and in effect, with the universal Church.

- The cause for canonization for Servant of God **Fr. Augustus Tolton** is inching forward. It is a long process. He is believed to have been the first African-American diocesan priest, ordained in 1886 for the Diocese of Alton, IL (now Springfield). The complete study of his life and ministry (the “Acts”) is officially under review in Rome by the Congregation for the Cause of Saints. This past December, according to protocol, his mortal remains were exhumed for authentication purposes.
- A century ago, the federal government passed a bill offering funding to states to improve their road networks, provided there was a mechanism to provide oversight for the funding and development. In 1917, the Minnesota legislature passed a highway bill establishing the **Minnesota Department of Highways** (MnDOH). From that moment forward, Minnesota officially had two seasons– Winter and Road Construction! With pothole season around the corner, let’s give our DOT employees a little love– their job is difficult enough.
- Speaking of driving...A parishioner suggested that I communicate to people the availability of a 10% reduction in insurance rates for drivers 55 and older, provided they complete a seminar every two years. They call it the “Seasoned Driver Training Program,” and you have to love the name! Thinking she was suggesting the course for me, I gently reminded her that I am not quite eligible myself– but getting closer! Visit [www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org](http://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org).
- Stingy goalies can also be thoughtful– **Minnesota Wild** star goaltender **Devan Dubnyk** invited brothers Erik (15) and James (12) Polsfut to the locker room after a recent victory for a meet and greet. Three weeks ago, while returning home from playing in a game at the Xcel sponsored by Wild’s Youth Hockey Spotlight program, the family received a frantic call that their home was burning down. All was lost including the family dog. What a great gesture.
- I’m not exactly known for acts of civil disobedience, but if Minneapolis steals the **St. Paul Winter Carnival Ice Palace** for next winter as part of its Super Bowl festivities, plan on seeing me chained to a block of ice! Thankfully, it’s just a rumor, but there is no way that should happen! We have to draw the line somewhere!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel

Pastor