

Dear Fellow Ss. Edward and Isidore Parishioners,

My name is Jody Zepnick. My family and I have been members of SS Edward and Isidore parish for the last 19 years. I am currently one of our Parish Trustees along with Tom Sprader.

When the request for the 2017 Bishop's Appeal speaker was made, I did not raise my hand... in fact, it was more like back in school, when you keep your head low and don't make eye contact, hoping Fr. Dave would not ask directly. I was not reluctant because I don't support the Diocese and the great ministries they implement, but rather because, I feel I am a terrible, nervous, public speaker. There had to be someone better qualified than I am. I really felt that I could not make that big of a difference.

After a several days of praying about it, and hoping God would pull me in a different direction, He made me realize that my reason for being reluctant to speak was exactly why I should speak. So, I raised my hand and have been praying ever since for God to give me the words to speak. As I looked into what to talk about, I did a lot of research and I asked many people their thoughts on the Appeal and I was surprised by what I learned. I grouped my learnings into four main questions or concerns about the Appeal.

1) **First, I was told "I don't really understand what the Appeal is about or why it is important for me to support it".**

The Bishop's Appeal is a direct appeal to people of the Diocese, to ask you to make a gift to support the Apostolic Mission and ministries of the Diocese of Green Bay throughout northeastern Wisconsin. "Inspiring Disciples" is the theme for the 2017 Appeal. These Catholic ministries reach many different people in need. The Appeal provides funding for ministries and programs which one parish could not possibly fund or operate on its own. Your gift to the Appeal will help in countless ways to "Inspire Disciples".

Within parishes, your gift assists in training and supporting pastoral ministers and parish staff. It supports outreach ministries, adult faith formation, and supports campus ministries for young adults. Young people learn about Jesus in our parishes and Catholic schools. Men are receiving training to become deacons, like our own Deacon Greg. Pastoral care is available to church members, and care ministers are trained to go out and share the Gospel with the homebound and sick. Your gift brings faith formation to people of all ages. Children and families are able to attend lively, interactive education programs learning the Word of God. Parishes and Catholic schools are able to provide strong religious curriculum, train educators and youth leaders.

Your gift to the Appeal helps Catholic Charities reach out to those in need by providing individual and family counseling. Young women in abusive relationships are able, through counseling, to stand on their own feet. Catholic Charities also teach people financial responsibility, connect families seeking to adopt with new-born babies, provide pregnancy counseling to birth parents and adoptive parents, guide individuals with unplanned pregnancies, and offer other counseling services. These are just a few ways your gift to the Appeal makes a difference. Your gift answers prayers and makes happy endings possible. In this short time, I cannot do justice to how the Apostolic Mission of our Catholic faith is made real by the services and ministries provided by the Appeal. There is much more information available at [www.catholicfoundationgb.org/](http://www.catholicfoundationgb.org/).

2) **Second, I heard "I don't understand or agree with the concept of our parish being assessed by the Diocese."**

While the Appeal is relatively new to the Green Bay Diocese over the last 20 some years, the collection of funds to support our larger Catholic, Universal, faith community is nothing new. The Appeal has been carried out in the United States and around the world for over 100 years under several names such as Catholic Charities Appeal, Diocesan Services Appeal and Catholic Services Appeal.

We read in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, about the collection for the Holy Ones or Saints in Jerusalem. This money was collected from all of the parish communities of the time, according to their means, and the money was used to support the missions and teachings of the apostles as well as care for the sick, homeless, widows and orphans of the communities.

One way this apostolic mission is still carried out today, is through the Appeal to each of the parishes in our Diocese. **Just as when the first Apostles walked the earth, today we are called as Catholic Christians, to support our Apostolic Mission to evangelize and serve beyond the walls of this building and the borders of our immediate community.**

3) **Third, I was told "I will just support our parish but not the Bishop's Appeal"**

Our Diocese and Parish are not unique when it comes to the Appeal. The Bishop's Appeal, Diocesan Services Appeal and Catholic Services Appeal are all different names for the same appeals around the country that support local diocesan ministries.

If our parish does not meet its goal, we must make up the deficit out of parish funds. Supporting the Appeal directly supports our parish. It does not pay for the Bishop's salary. It has never been used to pay legal settlements. You may or may not know Bishop Ricken, but if you get the opportunity, I would encourage you to get to know him. Last August, Bishop Ricken was here for our Harvest Fest Polka Mass. You could see that he was really enjoying the mass and the music, tapping along with his staff, or crozier, at the end of the mass.

Last October, Bishop Ricken led an eight-day pilgrimage focused on the "Shrines of French Canada". Two of our parishioners, Tom and Jane Sprader, were able to attend. When I asked Tom what he enjoyed about the trip, he said "Bishop Ricken". He was surprised to see how "Faith Filled and Down to Earth" the Bishop was and how he and his wife really enjoyed getting to know him on the trip.

Bishop Ricken is invited back this year for Harvest Fest Polka Mass and should be able to spend more time with us than last year. You heard his message last weekend thanking you for previous support and asking for your continued support of the diocesan ministries.

Despite his plea for support, the Appeal is not for the bishop, but rather for our parish and to support the Apostolic Mission and ministries of our diocese. So much of the time, we talk about building maintenance such as the roof, windows, lighting and other brick and mortar expenses. While maintaining our place of worship is important, the Appeal is our opportunity to focus on the real reason we are here. It is one of the opportunities we have to focus on the spiritual growth and transformation of the world around us. This is one of the few times we get to talk about "Living the Apostolic Mission" and funding the mission and vision of the Catholic parish and diocese in which we are spiritually invested.

Like many of you, over the last thirty plus years, I have been privileged to benefit from some of the ministry and training programs provided by the Diocese. I encourage you to just take a minute and look around you... Look into the faces of and eyes of the people that are helped directly and indirectly from ministries and services supported by the Appeal. These are the people that *you* are helping by supporting the Appeal.

#### **4) Finally, I heard that "I have not contributed before and I really don't see how I will make a difference."**

This brings me back to my initial dilemma regarding my personal struggle to speak today. We often feel that there are plenty of other people to help, and what we do, does not really matter or make a difference. I grew up as the sixth child in a very blessed family of 10 kids. With five older brothers, it is easy to think that what I did, did not really make a difference. What my faith and life have taught me, is that whether or not we want to, we all make an impact on those around us every day. Christ does not teach us to go through life without making ripples.

Most of us cannot change the world for everyone, but we all have the capability to change at least one person's world for the better. Your ripple can start with a smile, a kind word, a friendly greeting, holding a door, your gift of time to help or just listen, or your financial gift to help someone in need... you make a difference in a lot of lives, every day... including mine. This parish is very blessed and very generous, and always responds so well to everyone in need. Your ripples spread across your family, your friends, your parish, your work, the community you live in and around the world.

God works and answers prayers through us, His church. Open yourself to God answering others prayers through you. Your gift to the Bishop's Appeal makes a big difference to those receiving the support, and can make a big impact on you, when you see the results of your support, in others.

If each family, that did not contribute previously, gave just \$25 to the appeal, we would exceed our parish goal. That is the cost of one Christmas gift, a fraction of one month's cell phone bill, a fraction of one month's cable TV bill, a week's worth of coffee at a local coffee shop. If you have not given to the Bishop's appeal before, we ask you to prayerfully consider a gift. If you have already given, we thank you, and ask you to prayerfully consider giving a little more.

Regardless of your ability to pledge, we ask for your prayers for those in our parish and diocese, who are helped by and support the appeal. You make a big difference in the world around you.

Thank you for making that difference, and thank you in advance for your prayers and support of the 2017 Bishop's Appeal.

***May God's Grace, Peace and Love be with you Always.***

***Jody Zepnick, Parish Trustee***