

A Lenten Greeting and a Few Thoughts:

As I'm sure you know, many of my letters in the Bulletin come about because someone asks a question and I'd like to share both the question and answer which prompts this important missive:

Why did they move the DDF (Diocesan Development Fund) from October to the ACA (Annual Catholic Appeal) in Lent which moves around all the time?

The DDF was for many years the principle means of supporting diocesan-wide ministries and it worked well enough. About twenty years ago, it was decided to move to the current method of funding those same diocesan-wide ministries to Lent; to make sure people understood the reasoning for this change, the drive was given a new name, the Annual Catholic Appeal. The timing is important because the Appeal actually gives people the chance to undertake the Lenten observances (Penance, Almsgiving, and Works of Charity) during the holy season when we are all supposed to be thinking beyond the parish and out into the reality of the universal Church. Unlike the Sunday collections which help defray the costs of operating the parish, the Appeal allows us to join with our brothers and sisters all across the diocese and even beyond; for example, because the Appeal helps fund the Missions Office, our contributions support the larger work of the Church. We often hear that the Appeal allows the diocese to fund ministries no parish could manage on its own. Those ministries are the good works we're all supposed to be doing during Lent but extend the good work beyond the days of the season and through the entire year. The pledge or one-time donation we make to the Appeal is alms given not just for forty days of Lent but is spread over the entire year ahead. A vital part of the Appeal is the opportunity to share a prayer request which becomes part of the daily and all-year-long prayer of the diocese celebrated by those who gather for Mass at the Pastoral Center (my day to lead this important prayer is Friday and I always look through the basket filled with prayer requests so I can be familiar with the needs of those scattered all across Northwest Ohio).

I suspect many of us don't make the connection between the Appeal and those well-known Lenten Observances so I invite each and everyone of you to do so. Are you concerned about the priest shortage? Perhaps a "good work" giving "alms" to the ACA will help us address that pressing need. Are you interested in providing a wholesome Catholic education to our children? Perhaps a "good work" giving "alms" to the ACA will assist in making Catholic education more readily available. Are you concerned about the high rate of divorce? Perhaps your kind "good work" giving "Alms" to the ACA will allow the Marriage and Family Life Office to expand its ministry to those seeking a marriage and those looking for marriage enrichment.

As we approach the end of the Lenten Season, I invite you to seriously consider the Annual Catholic Appeal, not so much as a way to send money to the Pastoral Center but to hone our skills as those deeply devoted to good works, alms, and prayer. Not only will that permit the diocese to provide needed ministry, but it'll make your celebration of Easter far more meaningful.

*Mary Chris*