

## Good and Necessary Things

Perhaps you were wondering what happened to the Annual Pastoral Appeal (APA)? In our usual ebb and flow of things, APA falls between Christmas and Lent. Some folks thought it was missing or we had forgotten, and took action! – thank you to the people who have already donated to the campaign. But I decided that we needed a “breath” between Christmas and Lent (which came extra early this year) and so delayed our APA campaign until now, the month of April.

In the meantime, we have been thinking about things. When I became pastor in 2011, one of the first checks I had to sign was for over \$90,000 – the shortfall in our APA goal and the funds raised. So, the next year we began to more actively promote: What is APA? Why APA? etc. It was successful. From 2012 through 2014 we met or slightly exceeded our goal; not so much in 2015. We fell \$40,000 short and so we again “wrote the check.” When such things happen, it is prudent to discover what might be changing. Here is what we found: (a) there are about 500 households who consistently participate in APA and there are 2,500 households that do not, (b) the 500 households give, in total, about \$235,000, and (c) there is a pretty significant gap in the general understanding of APA. This last finding came about because we asked folks.

In many cases, the gap was due to our assumption that people understood APA and were not able or willing to give. What seems to be true is that there is indeed a gap in understanding, and there is a part of our parish that is reluctant or unwilling to give. A common sentiment was, “I want my money to stay here in the parish and fund the things here locally.” I think that we all share that idea in some degree. The folks that shared that with me have a very strong sense of belonging to Sacred Heart. That is a good thing.

But here’s the thing: APA is just the campaign to address an “assessment” to the parish from the Diocese for good and necessary services that have already been rendered. Before life as a Franciscan, I was in business for many years, even owning my own company. There are three kinds of “work” inside a business: mission-focused, general administrative / overhead, and specialty support. The Diocese provides those last two categories – and I am grateful that they do. In the “been there done that” category, I do not want to be the Executive Director of the not-for-profit entity called Sacred Heart. I want to be a priest and a pastor. Do you remember when we reworked the front steps/plaza of the church? I was able to call the Construction Department in the Diocese. Brian Laverty came and helped us walk through the scope, bidding, and details of the work. It was a blessing.

All the while, the Diocese lets us do ministry while they provide HR, payroll, insurance processing, liturgical support, faith formation training and certification, child safety programs, and a whole host of administrative and specialty services. And in addition to all that, they take on ministries that are too large for one parish to address: homelessness, elder housing, seminary formation, prison ministries, and the list goes on. In other words, the “assessment” is a bill for valuable services rendered. It is right and just that I pay the bill, but I need the help of the parish.

I became pastor of a parish that uses the APA campaign to raise funds for administrative and Diocesan ministries while using the Sunday collection for our local ministries and staff. Honestly, it is not the way I would prefer to do it. If I was in charge... wait, I am pastor! .... a better way is to be a “stewardship parish” that views all of its expenses as our unified responsibility and encourages Sunday giving to cover the current expenses plus saving for the future. To do that, we would need to increase our already generous Sunday collections by about 30%. That is our long-range plan – with a bonus when we get there:



we will stop doing APA campaigns! But, in the meantime, we use the APA campaign to fund a part of the good and necessary things done for us by the Diocese.

If you are part of the 500 or so households that faithfully participate – thank you and please continue. If you have not yet or never participated in APA, I need you to do so; simple as that. APA may be not pretty, but it is the way we fund things for the moment – and your participation is a sign that you belong to this parish.

For we who have been given so much, much is expected. This year our parish goal, our fair share, is \$308,000. The “faithful 500” have done the heavy lifting (for which I am grateful). I pray the other households will help us grow to become the “faithful 1,500” or better yet, the “faithful 3,000.”

Stay tuned as we roll out the APA campaign this month. Contribution envelopes will arrive mid-month, but in the meantime, think and pray about how you support this community to which you belong. Thanks for reading.