

Local News

Appeal organizers look to follow-up to make goal

By Lee Strong

Early Thanks Giving Appeal (TGA) figures indicate that this year's campaign is running behind last year's.

But TGA officials caution that the results thus far are incomplete, and express optimism that the appeal will reach its \$3,850,000 goal. The early figures are based on receipts from three weeks of in-house solicitation.

As of November 11, parishes had reported \$2,679,151 in pledges — 70% of the 1988 goal. In contrast, at the same point last year, the 1977 campaign had received \$2,883,139 in pledges — 80% of the goal of \$3,584,000. Thus far this year, 33 parishes have met their quotas; at a comparable point in the 1987 campaign, 43 parishes had already met their goals.

In a some parishes that are falling short of their quotas so far, staff members say that the appeal's success depends on some factors beyond their control. These factors range from declining numbers of parishioners to disagreement with Bishop Matthew H. Clark on some issues.

Appeal director Patrick Sullivan pointed out that the these early figures are not a fair assessment of the campaign thus far this year. "Until the final report is the only time that you can really say there was some difficulty," he said. "I don't want to say there is a difficulty at this point."

"It's still too early to make an assessment of the outcome because some parishes have not completed solicitation," noted Joan Ryan, TGA general chairperson. "We don't anticipate any problem with making goal."

The Thanksgiving Appeal is the Diocese of Rochester's major source of income. In 1985, the campaign fell short of its goal, and the diocese was forced to cut programs and leave positions unfilled.

Sullivan noted that not all the returns received by the diocese as of November 11 had been counted, and that seven parishes had not reported any returns thus far. "It's important to show that this is only the third report," he added. "There are two more."

Most parishes have now completed their in-house solicitation and have begun the follow-up phase of the campaign, Sullivan said. This phase will include letters, phone calls and home visits. Final returns are not due until December 15. "I am very optimistic that we will make the quota," Sullivan said.

At the same time, he cautioned against complacency. "I think it's critical at this point that the parishes that haven't met their quotas are now in the phase of follow-up. If the leadership of the parish community do their job, (the parishes) will meet their parish quota."

Sullivan also cited support from pastors as essential to the success of the TGA. "If the pastor doesn't see us as an important instrument in the Church, there's nothing we can do," the director said. "Without the pastor's total support, it will not succeed."

Nevertheless, some pastors maintain that factors other than their support can affect the success of the TGA in their parishes.

"People are quite generous for specific things, but for something as vague as the (TGA), it's hard to get people to give," said Father Thomas Nellis, pastor of St. John the Evangelist in Clyde and St. Patrick's in Savannah. "We struggle every year."

Father Nellis estimated that St. John's will only reach 2/3 of its \$15,571 quota despite attempts to encourage parishioners to give. He attributes the lack of support to indifference — and to antagonism dating back to the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on war and peace and to Bishop Clark's participation in a protest Mass at the Seneca Army Depot in 1983.

"Some of the people in this area have worked for the Seneca Army Depot and many of them are veterans," Father Nellis explained. "Some people took it as a slap in the face. That's probably true of a lot of people in the Finger Lakes."

Father William Cosgrove of St. Dominic's in Shortsville estimated that his parish will fall short of its \$16,050 goal by approximately \$500. He believes that people do support the appeal — as evidenced by some generous pledges — but that a new parish center completed last year depleted available contributions.

St. Dominic parishioners pledged more than \$260,000 to build the center, and will be paying off those pledges until May, 1989. "If we didn't have the new parish center, I probably would have pushed harder," Father Cosgrove acknowledged.

The parish campaign did include in-house solicitation, a letter to parishioners and a Sunday homily. "People here are generous," Father Cosgrove concluded, "but because of the center they are carrying a burden. Considering

that, we do well."

St. Francis Desales Parish in Geneva will probably meet its \$31,000 goal, according to Deacon Stephen Carroll, the parish's business manager. But he said that making the goal is a struggle for the parish.

"This is generally an older community, so you're talking about a lot of fixed incomes," the deacon explained. "It's tougher to get more money out of them."

Deacon Carroll said that he believed the parish's quota was high, but fair. "I think the diocese is doing the best that it can to make it fair," he remarked. "It's a very complex formula figuring out what your quota is, but as far as going from parish to parish, it doesn't take into account age or other factors, for example."

Sullivan defended the formula that the diocese uses to compute parish quotas. The figure is based on three factors: the average household income in a parish as determined by the 1980 U.S. census; the average number of TGA pledges for a parish's two most successful years between 1982 and 1984; and a multiplier based on the total adjusted household income for parishioners who made pledges, as compared with the total adjusted household income of all parishioners in the diocese who made pledges.

Sullivan acknowledged that some parishes had undergone changes in the number of parishioners and their household income, but noted that the figures being used to compute quotas can't be changed until after the 1990 census. He added that parish leaders who think their quota is too high can appeal. This year, seven parishes did so, and all seven had their quotas reduced.

Moreover, Sullivan pointed to the 33 parishes that have already exceeded their quotas. He attributed their success to parish staff and parish appeal committee support for the TGA.

One parish that has reached its goal is St. Charles Borromeo in Greece. With a quota of \$74,999, the parish has already received \$78,496 in pledges. Father Terence Fleming praised the parish's experienced, highly organized appeal team for the campaign's success. He also ascribed part of the success to parishioners being happy about activities in the parish.

"There's a lot of support in the parish," Father Fleming said. "I think a lot of this is that

people are pleased about the direction the parish is taking. I don't think people are willing to give to the diocese if they don't like what's going on in the parish."

Father Fleming and his parochial vicar, Father Joseph Catanise, both arrived in the parish in June, and have received enthusiastic support from parishioners, Father Fleming said. He cited as evidence of that support the growing number of people coming to the parish, and the way the appeal goal was met. "I was pleased that it was made in-house, because it shows the worshipping community is the core that's supporting the parish," he remarked. He added that as far as he knew, the parish had never gone over quota during the in-house phase before.

In support of the appeal, the parish team sent letters to parishioners, and at every Mass people were reminded where pledges were being collected. Father Fleming also preached about the appeal, emphasizing the importance of supporting the diocese.

"I think the important part of preaching about the appeal is not to cover every detail, but to get a broader sense of how the Church serves the needs of the people," Father Fleming noted. For example, he employed Bishop Clark's sabbatical to learn Spanish as a selling point for the appeal. "I used that as an example of a man who's trying to meet the needs of the diocese because we have a growing number of Hispanic people," he said.

Sullivan remarked that if more parishes were able to show such committed support to the appeal, the diocesan goal would be easily met. He added that when parishes fail to meet their goal, "the other parishes foot the financial burden of meeting the overall diocesan goal."

The director pointed out that this was unfair to the parishes that have exceeded their quotas. He also noted that when a parish fails to meet its target, it is billed for the difference between the goal and what was actually raised. That money then comes out of parish operating expenses, or depletes savings and investments.

However, Sullivan predicted that with a final push, the diocesan goal will be met. "We're going into the home stretch," he concluded. "We're going through that critical point now. We will make the goal as long as people continue to do the follow-up."

City/county officials name advisory group on homeless

By Richard A. Kiley

Responding to recommendations made last September by a local task force on the homeless, Monroe County Executive Thomas R. Frey and Mayor Thomas P. Ryan last week formed an advisory committee on homelessness.

The committee has been given 18 months to make a final report on what should be done to help the city's homeless.

"The mayor and I believe that the advisory committee can be very helpful in developing ways to secure community support of services for the homeless," Frey said.

Ryan added that the committee would be also be helpful because it includes representatives from both public and non-profit organizations that provide funding and planning services as well as direct services to homeless people.

Virginia Fairchild, director of Sojourner House, will head the 12-member advisory committee, appointed by the mayor and county executive.

The report that called for a group to coordinate a comprehensive, year-round approach to the problems of homelessness was *Beyond Bed and Breakfast: Final Recommendations from the Mental Health Association's Task Force on the Homeless*, released September 14. The task force spent 30 months studying the problem in Rochester.

Committee members plan to study the report and determine the feasibility of implementing its various recommendations. The advisory group has also been asked to monitor the extent of homelessness in Rochester, keeping the community informed about the problem and encouraging broad public, private and non-profit endeavors to meet the needs of homeless people.

Most of the shelter and food services to the city's homeless are now provided by non-profit organizations, including the three parishes that comprise the Parish Shelter Network. The church shelters provide temporary help for the homeless, but are dependent on the dedication of volunteers and private donations.

In order to break the cycle of homelessness, the 19-page Mental Health Association task force also recommended that the greater Rochester community provide: expanded alcohol and substance abuse programs; drop-in programs designed to serve the homeless population; a facility with five to seven beds for hard-to-place homeless; a permanent, 24-hour facility offering a limited number of year-round beds; and low-income housing in suburbs and surrounding towns.


However, the opening of a permanent shelter remains at least two winters away. Last September, William Privett, acting director of the Catholic Family Center and a member of the newly appointed committee, submitted a \$507,000 grant proposal to the state Homeless Housing and Assistance Program of the Department of Social Services. If the proposal is approved, the money will be used to help finance the conversion of an abandoned warehouse on Joseph Avenue into the Francis Hospitality Center, a year-round shelter for the homeless.

Diocesan officials are still waiting for approval of the grant proposal for the center, which would offer 20-long-term, single-occupancy rooms, 17 emergency beds and such support services as mental health, drug and alcohol counseling, job assessment and literacy training.

In addition to Privett and Fairchild, members of the joint city/county committee are: William Carreo, deputy director for income maintenance in Monroe County's Department of Social Services; Ethel Jackson, deputy director for the Office of Mental Health in the Department of Community Services; Jacqueline Whitfield, manager of the city's Office of Human Services Planning; Loretta Darling, director of the Volunteer of American men's shelter; Arlene Hughes, a member of the Mental Health Association's Homeless Task Force; Margaret Bringewatt, of the United Way Housing Committee; Joan Fuller, a member of the county's housing commission; and Irene Rivera-de Royston of the counseling department at Monroe Community College.

Two other ex-officio committee members are: City Councilwoman Lois J. Giess, and a yet-to-be-named county legislator.

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