

Local News

Letters give witness to spirit of annual Christmas appeal

By Lee Strong

In thanksgiving for the 'good' things that have happened to us, we would like to help someone less fortunate.

For Judy Taylor, such letters told the story of the 1988 Courier-Journal/Catholic Charities Christmas fund. "I don't like to be real analytical, but the notes that come with the donations have certainly reflected the right attitude behind giving," Taylor said.

Wish I could give more, but I am a widow with two children at home and (I am) living on a pension.

Taylor, resource program coordinator for the Office of Social Ministry, received a number of letters from the 1,678 donors who contributed a total of \$69,840 to the 1988 fund as of January 9. That money was used by various offices within the diocesan Division of Social Ministry to assist the poor during the Christmas season. What wasn't spent at Christmas will be used to help people throughout the year.

But the amount raised is not the most important aspect of the appeal, according to Taylor. "The appeal is not just to raise money," she said. "It's to sensitize people."

I just wanted you to know that my 11-year-old daughter, ... contributed \$5 of this and ... our 4-year-old (son), contributed 27 cents. They care too.

Taylor was touched by the number of donations from children and from people on pensions, suffering from illness or living in nursing homes. They frequently included notes apologizing for the size of their donations. Yet, Taylor declared, "That 27 cents is just as important as a larger donation."

"(The letters) give witness to the long history of generous response of diocesan people to share their riches with others," observed Father

John Firpo, director of the Division of Social Ministry. "It shows the spirit of God very much alive in the diocesan community. It shows the genuine concern people in the diocese have for others."

Since the Christmas fund's creation in 1969, it has amassed nearly \$1 million in contributions. That money has been used to provide gifts, clothing and food vouchers for thousands of people during the Christmas season. Various offices of the Division of Social Ministry, including the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry, the Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry and the Catholic Family Center, have distributed the fund.

Donations not allocated during the Christmas season are used by the agencies during the rest of the year to help meet emergency needs of people throughout the 12 counties of the diocese. These emergency disbursements may help solve rent problems, pay utility bills, meet medical needs, or resolve food and clothing emergencies.

Because the aid is ongoing, Taylor pointed out that donations to the fund need not be limited to the holiday season. "Sometimes when we get checks after the holidays, people say, 'I'm sorry this is late,'" she noted. But "it's certainly not too late. Money is definitely put to use over the holidays, but there is a need throughout the year. The need is not seasonal."

Sorry, but I'm in a retirement home and can no longer contribute as I once did. God bless you in your work.

Although this year's campaign raised more than \$69,000, it still fell far short of the informal total for which diocesan agencies had hoped. "I must say that although I'm very satisfied, we are about \$10,000 short of the goal set by the various agencies (that distribute the fund)," Taylor said. Participating agencies, meanwhile, try to keep their requests to a mini-



mum, knowing that the Christmas appeal comes on the tail of the Thanks Giving Appeal, which raises funds to support overall diocesan operations.

Our nephew and his wife requested that we donate the money we would have used for gifts for them to a worthwhile cause.

This year marks the first that Taylor has coordinated the Christmas fund. Last year, she assisted Maurice Tierney, associate director for Catholic Charities in the Division of Social Ministry, who this year has been busy as acting executive director of the Catholic Family Center. Father Firpo pointed out that with more time to devote to the campaign, Taylor has introduced a number of improvements, including updating and expanding the campaign's mailing

list, and improving the appeal and thank you letters. She has also encouraged parishes to include information about the campaign in their bulletins. In addition, he said, she has been readily available to answer questions from donors.

As a result of these efforts, the number of donors increased by 29 over last year's total. An even more significant statistic, Taylor noted, is that approximately 200 people donated who were not on the mailing list, suggesting that articles in the Courier-Journal, notices in bulletins and word of mouth were reaching potential donors.

"The real story (behind the success of the campaign) is the generosity of the people in the diocese," Father Firpo said. "They're recognizing the needs of people, and have made a response."

This is a very worthy cause. It makes us feel good to donate.

Registration steady for annual March for Life in Washington

By Richard A. Kiley

Despite the escalation in pro-life activity around upstate New York and across the nation, local organizers of bus trips to the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. on Monday, Jan. 23, are not seeing a marked increase in those signing up for the rally.

According to Don Peters, only 19 people have signed up to take the bus from St. Mary's Church in Waterloo "but it's still early."

"We expect a lot of people to sign up late like usual," said Peters, who is organizing the parish effort along with his wife, Cathy.

National pro-life leaders have planned a "Ra-

chel's Rescue," which will be led by pro-life women who have had abortions, at a clinic in the Maryland-D.C. area that weekend. Whether or not parishioners at the Waterloo parish will participate in that rescue — or any others scheduled for that day — is "a decision each individual has to make."

"We have told people that there are rescues scheduled and they can take part in them if choose to," Peters said, adding that people can sign up for the St. Mary's bus as late as Friday, Jan. 20.

Not all parishes sending buses to the march share Peters' sentiments.

"We're discouraging that (participating in

rescues) very much," said Kay McManus, parish secretary at St. John of Rochester Church. "We just want people to participate in a peaceful march."

McManus, who is helping coordinate the parish's excursion to the nation's capital, said that registration has been "about normal" with about 45 people already signed up.

"We're planning to fill at least two buses," said McManus. The parish has a deadline of Jan. 10, but people can still sign up until Jan. 17.

"We won't turn people away so long as there is room," she added.

At St. Margaret Mary's in Appalachen, where Father David P. Simon has taken an active role in the pro-life movement, the effort to send buses to Washington has gotten a late start.

According to Jan Borromei, the parish was considering not sending buses to the march because many parishioners had been arrested at rescues in nearby Vestal. They might not be able to travel to Washington because of pending court decisions.

"We decided just this week to send buses, so we're a little behind," Borromei said. Those wishing to attend the march have until Jan. 20 to sign up.

St. Jude the Apostle Church will once again be sending three buses to the march, but rescue activity has also pared down the number of re-

gistrants.

"We did lose some Project Life people because they will be spending the weekend in jail," said Dee Dries, referring to Project Life of Rochester which has organized several rescues in Rochester. "Right now we have 75 signed up, which is a little bit less than what we had at this time last year."

St. Thomas the Apostle Church is sponsoring a bus trip for the first time this year. The effort was spearheaded by Don Foley, a parishioner at St. Thomas who died last summer.

According to Mary Jo Maurer, the parish contact for the march, approximately 20 people have signed up. Parishioners there are also being discouraged from taking part in any rescue activity.

"They can get arrested any other day of the year," said Maurer, who added that she might be arrested for her participation in a rescue mission some day. "It would be a circus if everyone went (to Washington) and got arrested."

The Perinton Community Church will also be sending a bus to Washington for the third year in a row. Space is still available. The deadline for registration is Jan. 18.

Those wishing to still sign up for the march should contact the Peters at 315/539-8860; Dries at 716/334-7562; Borromei at 607/625-3191; Maurer at 716/342-3216; or McManus at 716/248-5993.

Bereaved spouses invited to Cenacle's day of prayer

The Cenacle Center for Spiritual Renewal will host a day of prayer for widows and widowers on Sunday, Jan. 15, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Information about the dynamics of grief

and an opportunity to share experiences will be part of the day.

The guest speaker will be a representative from Grief Resource Information Education Forum, Inc. Participating Cenacle staff members will include Helen Patsynski, and Sisters Margie Mayk and Gina Terraza.

The offering for the day is \$12. For more information or reservations, contact the Cenacle Ministry Office, 693 East Avenue, Rochester, N.Y., 14607, or call 716/271-8755.

Faculty member to perform

Sister Barbara Staropoli, SSJ, will be the soprano soloist in a Nazareth College faculty recital to be presented Sunday, Jan. 22, at 3 p.m. in the college's Gerald C. Wilmot Hall of Music.

Staropoli, associate professor of music at Nazareth College will be accompanied by Joseph Werner, piano, and John Wiesenthal, guitar. The program will include works by Fernando Sor, Franz Liszt, Claude Debussy and Charles Ives.

A member of the college's faculty since 1971, Sister Staropoli holds a doctor of musical arts degree in performance and literature from the Eastman School of Music. She serves as coordinator of Nazareth's vocal program, and director of the chamber choir and opera workshop.

Society requests used stamps

The Vincentian Foreign Mission Society is seeking used postage stamps to be converted to funds to support missionaries. The stamps should be sent to: Stamp Department, Vincentian Foreign Mission Society, St. Mary's Seminary, Perryville, MO 63775.

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