

The Christmas joy of anticipation

The third week of Advent begins this Sunday — Gaudete Sunday, a Sunday of rejoicing. This is the week the pink candle of the Advent wreath is lighted. Yes, the pink candle.

The week ahead is also the third week of the *Catholic Courier*/Social Ministry Christmas Appeal.

With two whole weeks remaining for both Advent and the appeal, it would seem premature to begin rejoicing over either. Logically, therefore, the pink candle should be lighted last, and Christmas Appeal success stories should follow a final tabulation of contributions.

But when you consider the joy in other occasions of waiting — the expectant mother's anticipation of feeling the first movement in her womb; the gardener's expectation of seeing blossoms on the vine; everyone's pleasure at smelling the aroma of bread baking in the oven — lighting the pink candle this week is a well-timed reminder that as Advent people, we should conduct our preparation and waiting for Christ-with-us in joyful hope.

Likewise, celebrating the Christmas Appeal's successful results at the campaign's halfway point illustrates what joyful hope donations can bring to people at very dark points in their lives.

Last year 22,000 individuals turned to diocesan agencies of social ministry for emergency assistance. Thanks to Christmas Appeal funds, no one was turned away.

Our community supports numerous programs for holiday aid. Many are limited to food and/or toys. The guidelines of some other programs exclude such needs as rent, house repair, transportation and medicine.

The Christmas Appeal is unique in two ways. First, it typically covers the cost of items or services that can't be paid for by any other source. Secondly, although donations to the fund are solicited at Christmastime, proceeds are available to individuals and families in need throughout the year.

Thousands of people were helped through crises in 1992 because of the generosity and compassion of the Catholic community. A real difference was made in their lives and, in many cases, the dollar amount needed was relatively small. A few examples follow:

Tom, who had been unemployed for several months, was completely out of cash when several job leads finally came in. He needed to wash his clothing and make copies of his resume. The Christmas Appeal provided \$10 to cover laundry and print-

An Advent Calendar of Prayers

Sunday, December 13

Pray for the Christmas Appeal's success. So many needy people are waiting for assistance.

Monday, December 14

Pray for the lonely, who wait each day for a visitor or a letter in the mail.

Tuesday, December 15

Pray for the joy of reconciliation and for all who wait to know forgiveness.

Wednesday, December 16

Pray for people who are handicapped, disabled and specially challenged, who wait for justice and access to places and things we take for granted.

Thursday, December 17

Pray for our brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe, who know new freedoms but wait for economic stability and justice in a new political system.

Friday, December 18

Pray for children and the young at heart, who wait for Christmas with enthusiasm and anticipation, that their waiting will lead to the true meaning of this season.

Saturday, December 19

Pray for families who grieve the death of a loved one this season, that in their waiting they may be comforted and strengthened by God.

What is Christmas?

It is living in hope,
 holding out the hand of reconciliation,
 accepting strangers,
 helping one another to do good,
 wiping away tears.

Every time love is given,
 distress is relieved
 and someone is made happy,
 God comes down from heaven
 and brings us light.
 That is Christmas.

— A Haitian carol

ing costs, as well as bus fare to his interviews.

Donna relied on the community food pantry to feed her family while she awaited approval for food stamps. She was able to buy some special foods for her diabetic son with \$5 of Christmas Appeal funds.

During Linda's last layoff her savings were used up quickly. When an offer for a job as a taxi driver came along, she couldn't afford the fee to obtain a chauffeur's license. The Christmas Appeal came through with the \$21 that enabled her to take the job.

The appeal provided another job applicant with \$7 for copying a birth certificate and other necessary employment documents.

Mike and Julie each work two part-time, minimum-wage jobs to support themselves and their 2-year-old daughter, April. They have no medical insurance. When April developed pneumonia, Christmas Appeal funds covered the \$100 in prescription drugs that brought her back to health.

A woman in her mid-50s lost her husband after a long battle with cancer. Her savings were exhausted to settle all of the medical bills. Although she owned her home, a part-time job

didn't provide enough money for her to meet all the household expenses and taxes. Her parish gave her some assistance, and with \$150 more from Christmas Appeal funds she avoided foreclosure. She has since secured a full-time job.

A resettled refugee family suffered the tragic loss of a child. The father was only earning minimum wage and could not afford the funeral. The Christmas Appeal offered \$65, which was added to other donations to cover the burial costs, saving this family additional anxiety amid their bereavement.

Terry usually needed help to buy food by the end of the month. Last summer, in addition to a food voucher, Christmas Appeal funds bought \$10 in bicycle parts so her son could take on a paper route and add to the household income.

Carl had been a regular soup-kitchen guest. He had no income and no relatives. He did have determination to overcome his circumstances. The Christmas Appeal provided Carl with \$6.50 to obtain a non-driver's identification card, which enabled him to secure his current job.

Jack was out of work for several months, and many bills piled up. Once he found work, he arranged a

repayment schedule, but found it necessary to seek help with a furnace repair. His wife was due home from the hospital with their fourth child. Thanks to \$45 from Christmas Appeal, his new daughter received a warm welcome.

Gilda, who is no longer able to work because of a stroke, was victimized by bureaucratic paperwork. She was suddenly cut off from receiving food stamps. While the government straightened out her case, she was able to depend on a \$25 weekly food voucher from the Christmas Appeal.

Noreen, a divorced mother with an income of \$200 per week, faced the prospect of losing her home and four children as a result of a drainage problem with her septic tank. The expensive repair was beyond her means. Several charitable sources, including the Christmas Appeal, helped her pay the \$350 needed to secure a low-interest repair loan.

An elderly man on a very limited fixed income was forced to move to a new apartment that did not include appliances. She bought a good used refrigerator with \$45 in Christmas Appeal funds.

An impoverished family avoided eviction through a \$50 grant; a rural father was able to make appointments with the Department of Social Services, thanks to \$5 in gas money; a single mother enrolled at a community college, using \$8.75 in Christmas Appeal funds to file a Financial Aid Form; a man willing to work now gets back and forth from the job site on a \$20 used tire paid for by the Christmas Appeal; a low-income household coping with the death of the family's only wage earner still has electricity thanks to a \$40 grant.

K of C council challenges Knights

Robert D. Brown, currently a trustee and former grand knight of Knights of Columbus Council 178, called the *Catholic Courier* office Friday, Dec. 3, to report that his council has donated \$2,000 to this year's Christmas Appeal.

Brown challenged all Knights councils and individual members to make donations as well, by following the procedure described in the box below.

What is the Christmas Appeal?

It is a cooperative effort of the *Catholic Courier* and diocesan Social Ministry to raise funds that will help people in desperate financial crises.

For 22 years, the appeal has enabled the Catholic community to help thousands of people in 12 counties to meet life's basic needs. Christmas Appeal funds have been there for them when no other sources of aid were available.

Who benefits from the appeal?

Funding from the Christmas Appeal helps individuals and families in short-term crises. These are people who have no financial resources and are either awaiting or ineligible for assistance

through other sources.

They represent all ages, religions and races, and include the physically and developmentally disabled.

How does it work?

The appeal consists of a series of articles in the *Catholic Courier* and a direct-mail solicitation of prior donors.

Appeal proceeds are allocated to the emergency funds of the following diocesan agencies: Catholic Family Center, 26.33 percent; Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry, 26.33 percent; Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry, 26.33 percent; Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation, 10 percent; and diocesan Urban Services, 11 percent.

CATHOLIC COURIER SOCIAL MINISTRY Christmas APPEAL

I want to help. Please use my donation to help a neighbor in need. Mail check (payable to "Christmas Appeal") and this coupon to:

Christmas Appeal
 c/o Social Ministry of the Diocese of Rochester
 1150 Buffalo Road
 Rochester, New York 14624

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____