

TGA pledges running \$100,000 behind last year's pace

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — The 1992-93 Thanks Giving Appeal is lagging approximately \$100,000 in pledges behind the 1991-92 TGA at a comparable stage of the campaigns, diocesan officials report.

If the 1992-93 TGA fails to reach its \$4.14 million goal, the Diocese of Rochester may have to implement contingency plans to offset a potential deficit, noted Father John Mulligan, moderator of the Pastoral Center.

When last year's TGA fell short of its \$4.345 million goal — taking in only \$4.070 million — the diocese was forced to eliminate more than 25 positions and to cut back on services.

The TGA is the diocese's chief source of income. In fiscal year 1992-93, it represents 61 percent of the diocese's \$6.8 million budget.

As of Jan. 7, 1993, parish efforts and the TGA's leadership phase had brought in approximately \$3.8 million in pledges from 48,500 donors, according to appeal director Tom D'Agostino.

The parish phase of the 1992-93 TGA



DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

consisted of in-hall solicitation during the weekends of Oct. 31-Nov. 1, Nov. 7-8 and 14-15, as well as parish-level follow-up efforts.

The leadership phase, which involves personal contacts with individuals who had contributed \$200 or more to previous appeals, produced pledges of \$1,333,177, D'Agostino reported. That figure is up from the \$500,000 generated by the leadership phase of the 1991-92 TGA.

Although D'Agostino said it is difficult to determine a day-to-day comparison with last year's TGA, he estimated that the current \$3.8 million figure is approximately \$100,000 behind the pledges received at about the same point in the 1991-92 effort.

Some returns are still coming in, and the campaign will continue through

the end of the diocese's fiscal year on June 30, 1993, D'Agostino said. He also noted that the TGA office will begin its follow-up effort in February with letters and phone calls to prospective donors. Last year, follow-up efforts produced \$300,000 in contributions.

D'Agostino attributed the low figures for the current TGA to the poor economy and to continuing distress over restructuring of Catholic schools in Monroe County.

"We've gotten cards back with hardship written on them," D'Agostino reported. "People are going back to work, but they are still trying to recover and they are looking at how much they give."

Meanwhile, D'Agostino said, "I would add that we are probably not out of the woods with the school-closing issue. Parishes that (experienced pledge declines) last year are still down, or are dropping more."

D'Agostino added that TGA officials hope people will not use the appeal as a forum for protest of school reorganization.

Last year, diocesan officials acknowledged that protests over the

closing of schools had resulted in lower returns from several parishes.

Should the TGA fall short again this year, Father Mulligan observed that the diocese's Stewardship Council, which oversees diocesan finances, already had identified \$200,000 in contingency-measures. He declined to elaborate the exact nature of those measures.

Council members will decide when and if those contingency measures should be implemented, Father Mulligan noted. He cautioned that not all of those measures "would be immediately evident in reduced services," adding that some of the possible shortfall could be offset by savings made during the first six months of the fiscal year.

"There's a whole variety of strategies that we have available," Father Mulligan stated.

One strategy not being discussed at this point is reinstating a quota system for the appeal, D'Agostino said.

From the appeal's inception through the 1990-91 campaign, parishes were

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