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Parishes try to spread the word on biblical idea of sharing 'gifts'

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

Tom McCarthy has reasons to be grateful. His wife, Clara, survived an attack of Legionnaires' Disease. He is a recovering alcoholic.

McCarthy doesn't mind sharing these personal details of his life. Indeed, the parishioner of St. Mark's Church in Greece does so regularly at the conclusion of talks to parishes about sacrificial giving.

"Sacrificial giving is just a part of our whole spiritual life, of just about everything we do," McCarthy said.

McCarthy's "giving" comes out of gratitude to God for the gifts he has received — a point he makes in his talks.

"We challenge (people) with the fact that you should be giving in order to give back to God the gifts you have received," McCarthy declared. "What we're trying to accomplish is to raise people's levels of thinking to the spiritual level, so they give back to God what has been given to them."

Similarly, when Donna Pullano and her husband Frank try to get people to consider sacrificial giving, she points to who truly owns the world's goods.

"We are only stewards of what we have," said the parish-

ioner of Geneva's St. Stephen's Church. "It doesn't belong to any of us.

"It's our choice of whether we want to live as fearful stewards holding on to what we have," she added, "or if we want to be open or giving."

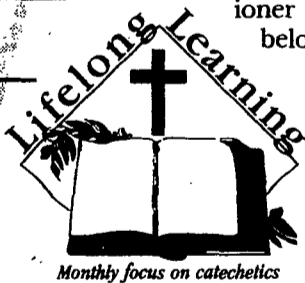
McCarthy and the Pullanos are among a group of people who practice sacrificial giving in their lives, who have witnessed its positive effects in their own parishes, and who

help to spread the word to other parishes. In trying to get the word out, they work with Thomas D'Agostino, who, in addition to directing the Diocese of Rochester's Thanks Giving Appeal, aids parishes with developing sacrificial giving programs.

Sacrificial giving, D'Agostino explained, is a biblically-based notion built on the concept of tithing. Ideally, he said, tithing means giving 10 percent of one's gross income to the church and the poor of the world — although, he acknowledged, people vary the percentage based on their circumstances.

The modern form of tithing involves giving 5 percent of one's income to the parish and 5 percent to other charities, including the Thanks Giving Appeal, mission collections, Catholic schools, and other worthy causes.

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