

# CONTINUED...

## Sharing

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Thus, for example, a person who earns \$300 a week would automatically set aside \$15 for the Sunday collection at church, and \$15 for charity.

"I — and most people, too — are guilty of giving from our excess, after you've paid your bills," D'Agostino acknowledged. "The model sacrificial giver calculates how much money will be coming in and transfers it to another account."

By transferring the money or setting it aside before paying other bills, D'Agostino noted, the giver is not tempted to spend it. Soon, it becomes habit.

"The transforming element to all of this is the giver begins to be at peace with what they are doing," D'Agostino stated.

Modern tithing also involves using one's time, talents and professional skills as a volunteer with one's parish or with charitable organizations, D'Agostino observed.

Although the notion of sacrificial giving is biblically based, the man most often cited for promoting the concept today is Msgr. Joseph Champlin of the Diocese of Syracuse.

While pastor of Holy Family Parish in Fulton in the 1970s, Msgr. Champlin launched an effort to promote increased giving and increased involvement of parishioners in parish life.

But in seeking to promote increased giving, the monsignor was fighting the fact that Catholics have a track record of being poor givers in comparison with other churches.

That fact has become more known through studies and such works as the 1987 book, *Catholic Contributions: Sociology and Policy*. Its authors, Bishop William McManus and Father Andrew Greeley, cited 1984 figures to show that that Catholics give 1.1 percent of their income to the church, while Protestants

give 2.2 percent.

And a 1994 study by Dean Hoge of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., revealed that Catholics give to their churches an average of \$386 per person, while members of Assembly of God churches average \$1,696; the Southern Baptist Convention, \$1,154; Presbyterian Church (USA), \$1,106; and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, \$746. (See story on page 7A.)

"The problem with Catholics is there are so many of us, we figure, 'Let George do it,'" Frank Pullano observed.

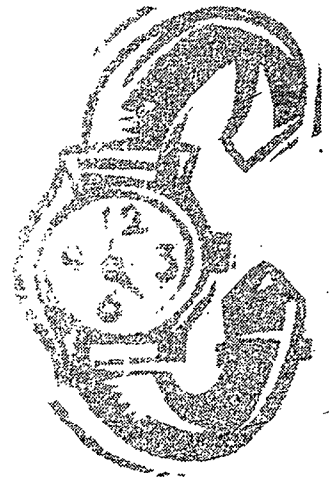
And Pullano said a second problem — one of which he was guilty — is that for many years, he continued to give the same amount, not taking into account the facts that he was earning more money and that church expenses had grown.

McCarthy echoed that observation. "Twenty-five, 30 years ago, you had this young couple with a ranch house and a car in the driveway, and they'd scrape together to give \$2 a week," McCarthy said. "Now they live in a colonial house with two, three cars and the kids are gone, and they still give \$2 a week."

D'Agostino said that part of the prob-

# giving

back to God what has been given to us



lem is that the church has simply not educated its people about finances.

"For years and years (the church) has just collected money," D'Agostino said. "We passed the hat. The message was, 'Whatever you give, God will be pleased,' and that hasn't helped to keep up (with expenses)."

Msgr. Champlin tackled such problems head-on, and achieved success in his parish in promoting the idea that Catholics could afford to give more and do more, and would do so if the situation was explained to them. His ideas became the basis of a program he spread to other parishes through a manual — *Sharing Treasure, Time and Talent* — brochures and videos.

Among the components of the program are: town meetings with parishioners to explain sacrificial giving and the church's need, letters to parishioners, talks at Sunday Masses by speakers such as McCarthy and the Pullanos, follow-up contacts with parishioners, reports on how parish money has been used, and annual renewal efforts.

The parishioners of St. Mary's Parish in Geneseo employed many of the elements in the program back in 1993. According to Madeline Peri, parish administrator, parish collections rose from approximately \$2,800 per week to just over \$4,000.

"We've been above our budget for the average Sunday," Peri said. "Our program has been wonderful."

Meanwhile, the number of parish volunteers has also increased. People who indicated an interest in helping were contacted by the heads of parish committees, and the parish started a notebook listing needs and interests to help link up people.

In addition, the parish established a social ministry committee so that the parish itself can begin to give more money to help others, and has set aside a portion of each Sunday's collection for this work. The parish also provides to parishioners full financial disclosure of parish income and expenditures.

Joe Kane, who headed the parish stewardship committee, said these last steps are important.

"Now the church itself had become a steward," Kane explained. "When you show these things the church is doing, (people) are going to follow the example."

"Just be honest," Kane continued. "Tell the truth about where the money is, where it's going and what it's needed for. That's the key. I think if people know where the money's going, they'll give."

Church of the Transfiguration in Pittsford also relied on communication with the people of the parish to help encourage involvement, according to Frank Farsace, a co-chair of the parish's stewardship committee.

"The reason communication is so important is lots of times, if you do a good job of communicating, then you find people are ready, willing and able to be involved," Farsace explained.

That communication extended not only to announcements from the pulpit and in the bulletin, but even to the makeup of the committee.

"We had two couples who were chairing the team, and 19 other representa-

tives from just about every walk of life in the parish," Farsace explained. "Father (Gerald Appelby) wanted a broad representation from just about every walk of life."

Even before the effort began, the pastor made sure the parish council and parish finance committee studied the program and gave their approval, and parishioners for nearly five months read letters and bulletin articles explaining sacrificial giving and the parish's needs.

As a result, the parish saw a 30 percent increase in collections from already generous parishioners, Farsace reported. But, he noted, simply increasing the collection is not the main purpose behind the effort.

"If we were successful at communicating what stewardship and sacrificial giving is in its most spiritual sense, then the budget will take care of itself," Farsace said.

Kevin Callahan found himself awakened because of stewardship information he saw in the bulletin at Caledonia's St. Columba's Church some four years ago.

"They had a chart in the bulletin about the average donation, how many (people) were giving a certain amount," Callahan recalled.

Not only did it affect how much he gave, but Callahan became the head of the parish stewardship committee. The parish has run a low-key version of the full program — with less follow-up, for example — yet still enjoyed increased collections of between 5 and 10 percent the first year, and about 5 percent each year since, he reported.

St. Mark's Parish turned to sacrificial giving in the mid-1980s due to its "rocky" financial situation, McCarthy said. Within six months, collections rose from just over \$2,000 per week to approximately \$3,000, and the church is on more stable financial ground. Indeed, by 1993, the parish was able to build a new church — which has already been paid for.

McCarthy acknowledged that despite such successes, sacrificial giving is a hard sell. People do not like the idea of "sacrifice."

One approach with people who are resistant, he said, is to speak with them directly "to give them analogies to particular things in their own lives when they've had to sacrifice in order to get something."

Another response, McCarthy suggested, is to tell them to start by just give a dollar or two more per week to get used to it.

Donna Pullano said that many people are afraid to give more. But allowing this fear to control them ultimately hurts them.

"Any time we open ourselves to give — be it money, be it time, be it anything — it's like an open hand," Pullano said. "If you live with a closed fist, you can't give anything, you can't receive anything. If you are afraid, you limit yourself spiritually."

But she sees sacrificial giving as a way to grow spiritually.

"How I approach it is, it is simply giving us another way to worship," Pullano concluded. "Going to Mass, giving your time in a soup kitchen, it's another way to worship. Our whole lives should be worship. I just know it's the best way to live."

**NOVEMBER BINGO CALENDAR**

SPECIAL PAID ADVERTISEMENT ■ CALL FOR HOLIDAY CANCELLATIONS

# BINGO

SUNDAY			
2:00 p.m.	St. Margaret Mary Church	400 Rogers Parkway, Rochester	716-342-2100
6:15 p.m.	St. Stanislaus Church	1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester	716-544-8851
7:30 p.m.	Holy Family Church	899 Jay St., Rochester	716-328-3110
7:30 p.m.	St. Boniface Church	15 Whalin St., Rochester	716-271-1488
7:30 p.m.	St. Rita School	1006 Maple Dr., Webster	716-671-1100
MONDAY			
7:30 p.m.	St. Mary Lyceum Hall	15 Clark St., Auburn	315-252-9545
7:45 p.m.	St. Charles Borromeo Church	3003 Dewey Ave., Rochester	716-663-3230
TUESDAY			
7:30 p.m.	St. Stanislaus Church	1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester	716-544-8851
7:30 p.m.	St. Helens Church	Gates Center Bingo, Westmar Plaza	716-235-1210
WEDNESDAY			
7:30 p.m.	Guardian Angels Church	2061 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester	716-334-1412
7:30 p.m.	Holy Family Home School Assoc.	899 Jay St., Rochester	716-328-4900
7:30 p.m.	Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church/St. Andrew School	923 Portland, Rochester	716-226-8458
THURSDAY			
7:30 p.m.	St. Anne Church	1600 Mt. Hope Ave., Rochester	716-271-3260
7:30 p.m.	St. Stanislaus Church	1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester	716-544-8851
8:00 p.m.	Holy Cross Church	4488 Lake St., Rochester	716-226-8363
FRIDAY			
8:00 p.m.	St. Mark Church	54 Kuhn Rd., Rochester	716-225-3710
SATURDAY			
7:30 p.m.	Good Shepherd Church	3288 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester	716-334-3518
8:00 p.m.	St. Thomas the Apostle Church	41 Colebrook Dr., Rochester	716-226-3848

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