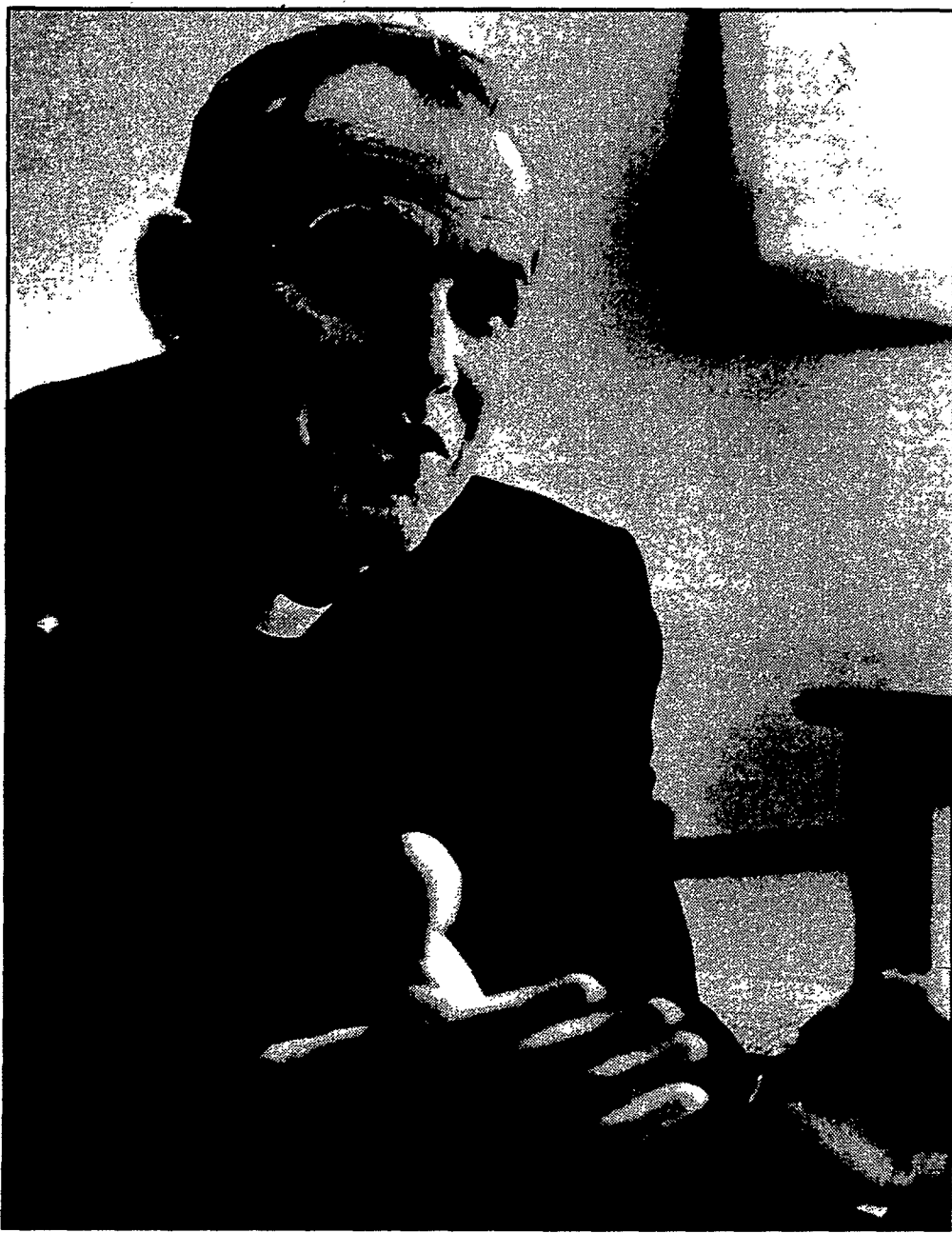


Finance & Stewardship

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Bishop calls for new forms of giving



File Photo

"The Kingdom of God is built up in the marketplace everyday, in the factories and the offices, not just in the churches."

—Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Story by Rob Cullivan, staff writer

Raising money for the church's ministries has changed a lot in the last 15 years or so, according to Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

"Yesterday's model was that of passing the plate in the church," the bishop said. "Now people ... are not going to give the kind of gifts we need without their support and without their participation."

The bishop was addressing the diocese's efforts to promote planned giving, a form of charitable donation that goes beyond parishes' weekly collections and Catholics' annual contributions to the diocesan Thanks Giving Appeal.

Indeed, the Thanks Giving Appeal itself was a precursor to the types of fund-raising vehicles the diocese is now promoting, the bishop said.

Prior to 1981, parishes were annually assessed a specific amount of money to give to the diocese for its annual budget, he recalled. The Thanks Giving Appeal was introduced, in part, to better inform the faithful of how the diocese used its money, thereby building more support among Catholics for the church's work, the bishop continued.

But the church's needs extend far beyond those met in annual and weekly collections, Bishop Clark noted. Today, bequests in wills, donations of real estate, and mutual funds that benefit both the diocese and the donors are among the many examples of *planned* gifts that Bishop Clark and other diocesan leaders are currently promoting to secure the financial future of the church's ministries.

Planned gifts will create a permanent source of funding for such areas as the retirement needs of the church's women religious and priests, lay ministry training and Catholic schools, Bishop Clark said. He added that these areas have been the focal points of the diocese's Miracle of Sharing Campaign which has been taking place for the last three years. (See related story on page 3A.)

The campaign uses lay volunteers working with diocesan leaders to make presentations to individuals and small groups of Catholics interested in making a long-term financial commitment to the diocese, the bishop explained. The diocese will eventually take the campaign to a wider audience in its many parishes, according to Mary Consler, diocesan director of special gifts/major gifts, and other diocesan financial experts.

There's nothing new about Christians giving to the wider church, Bishop Clark commented. Long before such vehicles as the Thanks Giving Appeal, U.S. Catholics regularly gave to specific campaigns on behalf of the church's ministries, he said. Even the New Testament's writers call on Christians to support church ministries beyond those undertaken by their individual congregations, he explained.

What's different today, Bishop Clark stressed, is that the diocese is calling on *all* Catholics — including many who might not consider themselves affluent enough to make planned gifts — to consider how they might participate in funding and supporting the church's work by methods other than the traditional one-time donations and Sunday collections.

At the same time, the church is calling on Catholics to give their financial and legal expertise to the church in order to better advise it on managing its funds, he added.

Already, a number of diocesan Catholics advise the diocese on how to use its funds, the bishop commented, pointing to the recent creation of a lay-run

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