

TGA: Life-blood of diocesan mission

"As each has received a gift use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4: 9-11).

A short while ago I made out my pledge card for the 2002-2003 Thanks Giving Appeal. It has been my custom for some years to make a pledge and pay it over time. That type of giving makes it possible to help a little more than I would be able to with a one-time gift.

As in past years, I did what I ask you to each year — that is, to stretch a little and make a sacrificial gift. Some are able, given their resources and obligations, to give x amount of dollars; others are able to give y amount of dollars.

What we ask is that all participate not with equal gifts but with the same spirit of sacrifice. If all the people of the diocese respond in that way, we will be successful. We will be able to meet our responsibilities as a diocesan family and show the face of Christ to others just a little more clearly.

I trust that you have already received by mail a request that you support this year's TGA as well as a brochure describing for you the



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

ways we put your TGA dollars to use. I hope that you are pleased by the information in that material, and that you are confident that we use your gifts in a wise and prudent manner.

I am well aware that there is room for disagreement about priorities we establish and about the sums we allocate in support of those decisions. That is to be expected in such matters; indeed, dealing with such differences of opinion is a great help in our continuing review of the decisions and allocations we make.

In the TGA process we enjoy the advice and counsel of an experienced and gifted staff and an impressive array of accomplished lay advisors whose generous guidance helps us to be good

stewards of the funds with which you entrust us. I hope that knowing this strengthens your confidence in what we are doing as much as it does my own.

If such wise guidance weren't enough, I have experiences almost daily that remind me of the importance of the TGA and what your gift helps us accomplish. As I look at my October calendar, I note events that put me in touch with that reality: work with youth, support and ongoing training of pastoral ministers, housing assistance for people in need of our support, strengthening of Catholic education and continued work in stewardship for the church of today and tomorrow.

I am aware that there are many claims on your resources and that it can be difficult at times to meet all of them. I will, of course, respect whatever decision you might make. What I do ask is that you at least consider a gift to the TGA. As you do so, please remember that we are all part of the Diocese of Rochester. Therefore, we are strongest when we all share in meeting the obligations that are ours precisely because we are a diocese.

I emphasize that fact because I occasionally meet people who

speak as though "the diocese" were some kind a separate entity having only some accidental, often oppressive, relationship with local parish communities. In our tradition, we are not a voluntary association of independent parish communities. Therefore, we are one family of faith — laity, priests, men and women religious and bishop — called to give glory to God and service to neighbor by the way that we live together and proclaim the Gospel.

And so: If you offered a gift to the TGA last year, I thank you very much and ask you please to consider a gift to this year's effort. If you did not make a gift last year, I renew my request to consider doing so this year. Your gift will help people in need. It will ease the burden of others in our community who sacrifice each year to make the TGA a success.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this request. I have one last but very important thing to ask of you: Whether or not you decide to offer a gift to the TGA, please pray for the success of this year's effort. It is really the life-blood of our annual activities, and absolutely necessary for our health and well being as a diocese. Peace to all.

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