

+ When I was younger I used hike a great deal (more time back in those days). So, I found myself on top of a mountain after number of hours of hiking. But boy, was it worth it seeing everything around me in a way I could never do down below. Life itself felt better, as well. I experienced God's glory.

So, I suppose that was some of Jesus' reasoning in hiking that mountain: to allow his disciples to see with a broader perspective and to appreciate just what they had in Jesus. ....Now, as I continued to climb around some rocks I heard a rattle – it was a rattle snake! I didn't even know we had them, as I had never seen one in my entire life. Let me tell you, that trip down was a bit nerve racking, as I was awakened to the possible danger ahead of me!

The disciples are introduced to glory, but they had also been reminded earlier that there was danger ahead of them. Six days prior to this Jesus, for the first time, told them that the Messiah had to suffer and die and only then rise. Gosh, they had been having such a good time!

But on that seventh day, on the mountaintop, they saw the glory. Perhaps that memory of the mountain would carry them through the dangerous times ahead. God always gives us something to sustain us.

Here, on this seventh day, on the mountain of the Christian Sabbath, we are given a chance to get the bigger picture, the deeper view. Here, we receive something of Christ's power to guide us in difficult days as Jesus says to us, as He does in the Gospel, "Do not be afraid."

But to experience this, we need to give of ourselves and not just sit around indifferent. The gospels for these first two Sundays of Lent focus on the essence of Lent: Turn away from sin, that you can know the glory of God. The temptations of Christ - turn away from sin; the Transfiguration - behold the glory of God.

A practical application of these two Lenten gospels is that whatever you are doing for Lent is to be done not simply for the penance of Lent, but also for the promise of Easter. The more we put into something to more we get out of it.

It is all about attitude! Whatever you are doing for Lent, or denying yourself for Lent, should enrich your faith. It is easy to get caught up in doing something for Lent just for the sake of "doing something for Lent."

"It's Lent again so I better do something." At least, I can tell people what I am doing for lent. And it satisfies my conscience. It frees me from thinking any further about what Lent should mean for me. I'm giving up desserts for Lent and that takes care of Lent. Not much glory to be found with that frame of mind.

+A woman speaks of dreading Lent. Every Ash Wednesday her brother announces that he is giving up beer for Lent. She says, "He gives up the beer and we do the penance of living with a thirsty grouch." Whatever you are doing for Lent, it should enrich your faith and therefore make for a more giving and loving disposition and thus experience the glory of God.

And that is my lead in to the 2017 Annual Diocesan Appeal – Building Our Family of Faith - and we are inviting all of our parishioners to make a financial commitment. I want to thank all of you who have given to the Annual Appeal in the past. Your gifts are deeply appreciated by the thousands of people served by our Diocese.

The Appeal not only provides an opportunity for you to support important ministries that impact many programs outside of our parish boundaries, it also supports the services the Diocese provides directly to our parish such as Fuel and Hunger Fund grants, Campus Ministries, youth and young adult ministries, retired priests or seminarian education. The entire list of the nineteen ministries supported by the 2017 Appeal can be found in the brochures located in the pews.

In addition, our parish receives back a portion of the funds collected. This year, the funds returned will be used for tools to improve communication, CCM and youth choirs, formation programs including continuation of Cathedral Speaker series and outreach to the poor & needy in our community.

It's very important to know the Annual Appeal is distinctly different from the Living Our Mission campaign. The Living Our Mission campaign was a historic first-time effort to build major endowments and capital to support our parishes and larger Church leading into the future. Although many projects were realized in the short-term, the vast majority of funds raised were designed for the future.

In contrast, the Appeal is initiated every year to meet ministry and program needs of the present. While the Living Our Mission campaign was an overwhelming success and set the Church up for a strong financial future, the Appeal is still a very necessary component of meeting our goals in the short-term. That is why we are asking for your prayerful support of a pledge or gift to the 2017 Annual Appeal.

Whether you have contributed already or not, we ask a member of each household to please take one of the pledge envelopes and a pen found in the pews at this time. Our portion of the overall goal here at the Cathedral is \$44,200. Every gift, no matter the amount, makes a difference.

On the front of the envelope you will find some biographical information that we need you to fill out. Please take a minute to complete this information in its entirety. Also, before opening the envelope, please make sure to check off one of the four circles indicating your gift intentions today.

Now I ask you to open the envelope. On the top flap you will find boxes with suggested gift amounts. Please check the amount that you wish to give. In the event that you wish to contribute an amount other than the ones indicated, please check the blank box and indicate the full amount of your gift on the blank line to its right.

An excellent feature of the Appeal is that you are able to make a pledge in support of this effort. This means you do not have to pay the full amount today. However, we hope you will put down as much as you can now as funds that are received are immediately spent on the programs and services supported by the Appeal. The sooner we are able to collect on our pledges; the sooner help will be

delivered to those in need.

In the event that you are making a down payment, write the amount of the down payment in the next box. Subtract the down payment from the full amount of your pledge and note the remaining pledge balance on the line provided. If you would like to make a one-time gift, please indicate that on the line provided.

Now find the “Payment Options” information located on the right side of the top flap as well as the entire bottom of the envelope. You have six options and are asked to choose one.

The 1<sup>st</sup> is a contribution through a credit or debit card. If you are using this option, please fill in the “Credit Card” circle and fill in the required information.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> option is an auto-debit off your checking account. If you are selecting this option, please check the “Auto Debit” circle and then present the name of your bank along with your Routing # and Account #.

In addition, you can choose to donate securely online, receive a monthly invoice, enclose a check today (payable to the Catholic Diocese of Richmond) or donate via stock or securities.

Once you have completed your information, please seal the envelope. The ushers will now come around and collect them.

On behalf of Bishop DiLorenzo and myself, I thank you for your contribution to the 2017 Annual Diocesan Appeal. May God bless you.

