
THE MONEY RECEIVED GOES BACK TO THE PARISHES



As we have just about reached the final stage of the Major Diocesan Financial Campaign, I want to point out that all the money received as general gifts and special gifts will go back to the parishes concerned, either as a cheque or in catechetical or pastoral services. This means that all donations solicited door-to-door will benefit the parishes themselves.

A LONG WAIT

For over a year, now, you have been hearing about an eventual financial campaign... This campaign officially got under way October 4, 2003; even then we were having positive results. Solicitation of major gifts of \$25,000 and over, and of advance gifts of \$10,000 and over was launched at that time. On January 9, 2004, the campaign had already reached 40% of its goal, one million four hundred thousand dollars in donations and pledges over a five-year period. Wonderful news: Priests' donations are over three hundred thousand dollars, and donations from religious congregations total over two hundred thousand dollars: a real incentive to us, all the more since major gifts, whether from the Caisses Populaires Acadiennes credit unions, auto dealers from our region, or forest product groups, unconditionally support our campaign.

EVERY GIFT IS IMPORTANT

Holy Scripture is replete with examples relevant to every generation: the widow at Zarephat shares her flour and oil (1 Kings 17:7-17), and a poor widow has only two copper coins to put into the temple treasury, but the Lord blesses these gifts: "She from her want has given what she could not afford—every penny she had to live on." (Luke 21:4) We have wonderful examples in our own milieu of people who have sacrificed their own personal fortunes great and small for the welfare of their fellow-citizens. We have only to think of the thousands of parishioners who got together in the heart of the Depression to build what was to become the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. I am also reminded of all those who, through financial campaigns and Club 200 helped build Collège St-Louis. I praise the Lord for these thousands of people who week after week contribute generously yet anonymously to our local food banks, during the year. I bless the Lord for all those who week after week support, through their church offering, their parish's maintenance and pastoral activities; if these weekly offerings were not there we would have needed several major financial campaigns in the diocese!

AN ACTIVE FAITH

What has impressed me the most from the beginning of the campaign is the motivation of the campaign directors and the donors. They give of their time, energy, and money because they believe in the Church. They do this in order to give to the present and future generations everything necessary for catechetics/religious education, and for appropriate pastoral services. The campaign directors are aware that they have received as a heritage from their parents and grandparents a very precious gift of faith, hope, and love. They want to pass on this wonderful legacy to those who are with them or who are coming after them. We do not always have the opportunity to measure the greatness of our inheritance, but an occasion like the present campaign is conducive to reflecting on this great value. In the Madawaska, the Restigouche, and Southern Victoria we have unsuspected treasures of faith, and visitors are quite delighted at such faith, hope, and love. The five-year pledges are a sign of this faith and hope, that it is not a flash in the pan but a serious commitment to the Gospel.

IF THE OBJECTIVES WERE NOT REACHED...

While we have come across people and groups who do not see the need for a financial campaign or who have refused to take part, we have received the support of the vast majority of the population, of their prayer and their generosity. People know that if we do not invest in catechetics and religious education now, our children tomorrow will not know the Gospel and will be totally ignorant of even the most basic prayers. For three years now children in one parish have been deprived of religious education... When parents decided to prepare them for Confirmation, the children did not even know the Our Father or the sign of the cross. This is not a fictional example; it just shows us the importance of being vigilant regarding catechetics and religious education. The same applies to family and youth ministry: How can we respond to the needs of families and youth if we did not reach our financial goal? And how could we train pastoral agents for parishes if we did not attain the minimum amount set? What could we do to preserve the riches of our churches? If we were deprived of one of them, our legacy would be that much poorer.

HE WHO SOWS BOUNTIFULLY

As we are about to begin visiting the families, I urge you to reflect on the wise words of the Apostle Paul, the greatest evangeliser of all time and the first man in the Church to organize a collection throughout all the churches he had founded. He held this collection in such high esteem that he called it "this service for the saints". (1 Corinthians 16:1) Read especially chapter nineteen of his second letter to the Corinthians where he writes: "He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Everyone must give according to what he has inwardly decided; not sadly, not grudgingly, for God loves a cheerful giver... He who supplies seed for the sower and bread for the eater will provide in abundance; he will multiply the seed you sow and increase your generous yield. In every way your liberality is enriched; through us it results in thanks offered to God. The administering of this public benefit not only supplies the needs of the members of the church but also overflows in much gratitude to God. Because of your praiseworthy service they are glorifying God for your obedient faith in the Gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with all. They pray for you longingly because of the surpassing grace God has given you." (2 Corinthians 9:6-7, 10-14) May ours be a generous and fruitful campaign! It is done for you and for our Church! It is done to continue building up the Body of Christ! For more information you may contact the campaign directors at 739-9003.

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