From The Pastor

The first weekend of May signals the annual Catholic Services appeal. This weekend, Archbishop Vigneron has prepared his message to the people of the Archdiocese regarding this financial support for the Church of Detroit. This year's theme is *'Sharing Christ in and through the Church'*. While the appeal is made this weekend, we will begin taking gifts and pledges the first weekend of May in the back of church and the parish office.

As you know, the CSA is the annual appeal to support the administrative and pastoral works of the local Church. This is a consistent practice in most every diocese worldwide. The monies collected support a wide array of services on a broad basis to both parishes and individuals to advance the mission of the local Church. We as a parish benefit directly, and more often indirectly through this appeal; some benefits are administrative while others are pastoral. This year, in particular, we were benefited with the lease agreement and legalities of getting the Charter School up and running.

As we have said in the past, this annual appeal is the best time to raise funds for the parish as well. All monies collected beyond our target amount are returned to the parish tax-free. In 2008, we received a refund of close to nine thousand dollars. In 2009, many pledges are not paid, and we may have to pay close to three-thousand dollars to satisfy the target amount for last year.

Our target goal this year is $36,999.00. This amount is six-hundred dollars less than last year. Our target has gone down for the last five years because our offertory collections are in a five-year decline. Given the economy, this is understandable. I share this information with you so that we all understand our financial status. I have asked our Stewardship committee to give particular attention to this concern. In the long and short term, we need some kind of stimulus to increase and sustain our weekly giving.

This is not a crisis, but it is a concern for the long-term financial viability of our parish. The shortfall in dollars not collected through Sunday offerings is currently covered by the income of the Charter School. This is a good thing, but not something we can take for granted and assume will be our long-term sustainability. The wiser approach is to remain as strong and vibrant as we can as a parish beyond the rent dollars we gain from the school.

Overall, I believe we are doing well, yet we must be prudent and vigilant about our finances. If all of us do what we can, as a generous response to our faith, I am confident God will be faithful to us. I am trusting that we can make our CSA goal of $36,999. To make the goal is important because we have to pay the target whether we collect the money or not. Any short fall comes directly from our savings.

Current capital expenses that we will face in the next few months include cement replacement on the Herbert side, a new roof on the garage and the convent, maintenance or upgrade on the air conditioning in the church, as well as ongoing upkeep of all buildings and property. These necessary improvements are estimated at approximately $25,000.00.

We have not done any major fundraising in the five years I have been at St. Vincent Ferrer. I am not currently intending to initiate major fundraising given the economy and financial climate. Yet, I would be negligent to not inform and challenge you to the financial needs of the parish with a vision to keep us strong. The Archdiocese is struggling with financial issues as they move through a diocesan wide financial assessment of all parishes and its properties. It is, and will become more explicitly the expectation of the diocese that each parish be active in some form of stewardship. This will include us. I see it as a positive expression of our viability as a parish and the historical generosity that has sustained us for over fifty years. We have to come up with a plan for what this stewardship might be.

The immediate appeal is for the CSA. Please make a prayerful response to this important work that promotes the gospel and the faith that is the center and foundation of our lives. More than a few have made a one time five dollar gift to this appeal. If this is all you can do, I thank you. However, I would like to encourage a monthly pledge proportionate to your ability and the breadth of services the CSA funds. I will continue my personal pledge of twelve hundred dollars to this appeal. Whatever you can do, do in faith with love and confidence.

Tables will be available next weekend for your gifts and pledges. Most importantly, I ask you to pray with me for the success of this appeal and for our parish finances. I am confident and grateful for the long generosity that has sustained this parish. I thank you.

The first weekend of May, I will travel to California to celebrate my sister's wedding. Please pray for our safe travel and for her happy marriage. Different priests will be here to do our Masses.
God bless you all.

Father John Esper