

This weekend is the pledge weekend for the 2020 Diocesan Stewardship Appeal. As I have mentioned in the past, the parish has regularly made its annual Diocesan Stewardship goal, and, thanks to your generosity, last year was no exception; thank you. The theme for this year's stewardship appeal is "Hear His Voice." Our support to the Diocesan Stewardship Appeal is one way we can help others hear the voice of Christ, for with the support to the Appeal, the various departments in the Diocese can carry out the mission given to us by Christ.

The funds raised for the diocese through this yearly stewardship appeal benefit not only the various diocesan programs, but also the individual parishes. Some specific ways in which it benefits our parish are in the marriage preparation process such as with the Gift of Self Seminar that all couples take, in the declaration of nullity process for people who desire to have the validity of previous attempts at marriage investigated by the Diocesan Tribunal in order to determine whether they are free to marry in the future, as well as in offsetting the cost of my salary for the parish. This year, due to the economic stimulus package and the effects of the pandemic, the Diocesan Finance Office also helped parishes throughout the Diocese, including ours, obtain an SBA loan to help defray some operating expenses. At the diocesan level, the annual stewardship appeal is used for things such as helping the poor through St. Elizabeth Ministry and Catholic Charities. It is also used for seminarian education so that we can have priests in the future, as well as supporting the Permanent Diaconate Program both in training men who are called to be ordained deacons as well as in supporting the existing deacons, such as Deacon Warren. A final example of how the diocesan stewardship appeal is used by the diocese is with the retired priests pension plan. Even during the time when much of society has been shuttered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the diocesan offices have continued to assist parishes and individuals throughout the Diocese, and the seminarians have continued their studies remotely.

Our parish goal this year is \$15,819, which is a reduction from last year. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the PPP loan for the diocesan offices, the Diocese reduced every parish's goal by 10% this year. Any shortfall to meeting our goal will have to be covered by the parish, but any excess money given comes back to the parish. Please prayerfully consider what you can give and join me in giving to the Diocesan Stewardship Appeal this year; any amount is welcome, and I understand if you have fallen on hard times because of the pandemic. A modern Catholic understanding of tithing is based on the biblical 10% idea, with 5% of one's income being given to the parish, 4% to other worthy charities, and 1% to the Diocese. In filling out your pledge card, be certain that it has your full name, including middle initial and any suffixes such as "Jr." or "Sr." Please indicate how much you are pledging, how much you are enclosing, and the balance. Checks should be made payable to "St. Mary Parish – DA." Please mail in your pledge envelopes or return them once public Masses resume. There is also the option of giving online, and the website is <https://www.rockforddiocese.org/donate/>. The Diocesan Stewardship video can be seen on the Diocesan website. Thank you for your generosity from years past and in your continued generosity this year with this important appeal for the diocese.