



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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Bishop's Annual Appeal launched at Administration Day, Sept. 9 2009

BY KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI

The 2009 Bishop's Annual Appeal (BAA), which annually funds a wide range of ministries, outreach and community groups in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon was launched at a diocesan Administration Day Sept. 9.

At the annual gathering of parish leaders from across the diocese, held at St. Mary parish in Saskatoon, BAA administrator Charlene Nijhawan introduced this year's appeal, which takes its theme from the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:40 "Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me."

The 2009 goal is \$1,158,000, an increase of about \$100,000 over last year, funds needed to fund some 28 ministries and programs, including such things as the education of future priests, rural catechetics, Catholic deaf ministry, the Lay Formation program, youth ministry, support for pro-life groups, vocation promotion, native ministry, hospital spiritual care, Friendship Inn, Catholic Family Services, and Justice and Peace.

This year's appeal was launched just as Bishop Administrator Albert LeGatt was leaving the diocese, to be installed Archbishop of St. Boniface Sept. 21.

"Although the appeal is made each year in the name of the bishop, it does not reflect the needs of any particular bishop, but rather encompasses and reflects what we as a diocese do, how we minister and whom we serve," said Nijhawan.

At its heart, the Bishop's Annual Appeal is about relationships, she said. "What really matters is one particular relationship through baptism as a member of the family of God, a disciple of Jesus," Nijhawan described. "And the question is: how do we respond in love and in relationship to our brothers and sisters?"

Rev. Ron Beechinor, vicar-general for the diocese of Saskatoon, described the BAA's importance in providing much-needed ministries and programs that in some cases have no other source of funding.

"All of the money collected in the appeal goes to ministry. It doesn't go into bricks and mortar,

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it doesn't go into buildings. It goes into ministries that are identified in the appeal brochure," Beechinor said. "When you look at the list of ministries – they are very, very significant ministries in our diocese. And the only way we have those ministries in our diocese is through the funding of the appeal."

Beechinor stressed the importance of support from parish leadership, in particular priests across the diocese, in ensuring the success of the BAA. "We don't have to do everything, but we have to give leadership, and we have to demonstrate genuine enthusiasm," he said. He noted that priests who are new to the diocese can seek help from Nijhawan in the BAA office or from fellow priests who are extremely familiar with the BAA and its benefits after 25 years.

With this year's higher goal it is critical that every parish makes a sincere effort to meet its BAA guideline, said Nijhawan. "Every gift is appreciated, but please, encourage 100 per cent participation, and encourage people to take a look at what they're giving, and perhaps consider contributing on a monthly basis throughout the year, as opposed to one out-of-pocket gift," she said.

"The parishes that historically have made a concerted effort to contact all parishioners and inform them well and enthusiastically about the Bishop's Annual Appeal have succeeded," Nijhawan said.

Once a parish exceeds its guideline, 75 percent of everything earned above that goes back to the parish in a Parish Sharing Incentive Program. Last year, \$266,063 went back to parishes.

BAA chairs from two parishes that have consistently exceeded their guideline, spoke about their efforts.

Merlin McFarlane of Christ the King Parish at Rose Valley in the Wadena deanery, recommended doing the Appeal quickly, with the help of enthusiastic volunteers, and with the expectation that everyone will contribute.

Lorretta Simonot, chair of the BAA for Holy Spirit Parish in Saskatoon, stressed the importance of having the pastor's support, as well as the need to make everyone in the parish aware about the campaign, always making it clear where the money is going. Follow up is also important – both to encourage people to contribute and to thank the volunteers who make the appeal a success, she said, describing Holy Spirit's follow up efforts.

Nijhawan expressed appreciation for the contribution of dedicated volunteers who year after year take on the organization and implementation of the Bishop's Annual Appeal. "They are the cornerstone of the appeal's success."

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In a letter circulated and read at parishes the Sept. 12-13 weekend, Bishop Albert LeGatt also thanked volunteers, and congratulated the entire diocese for 25 successful appeals since Bishop James Mahoney implemented the BAA in the diocese of Saskatoon in 1984.

“From Wilkie to Wadena, from Fox Valley to Langham, from the city of Saskatoon to the community of Nobleville, we have been steward of our many blessings, sharing the gifts we have received with gratitude and sacrifice, for the good of all. And what we did, we did together,” LeGatt said.

“We have fed the hungry, comforted the sick, supported vocations to the priesthood, nurtured the faith of our children, and enhanced adult faith formation. We have promoted respect for life and supported families in crisis. We have strengthened and revitalized parishes. We have journeyed with our brothers and sisters: the imprisoned, the deaf, the marginalized, the poor,” the bishop wrote.

“But we dare not rest in the pride of previous achievements, or fall into complacency. The cost of supporting the quality and expanse of these ministries and services increases annually. Now more than ever, renewed efforts and enthusiasm are needed.”