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Planned Giving News



Office of Stewardship Development

October 2009

Dear Greg,

As has become the custom, below I have included several announcements that I ask you to have placed in your weekly bulletins. It's good to remind people regularly about remembering your parish in their estate plans.

I recently made a presentation at a parish and heard a wonderful testimonial from a staff member. This staff member expressed to the group their gratitude to a person who left a bequest to the parish during the past year - for if they had not received this generous gift the parish would have run a significant deficit.

From my experience in this position, I know stories such as this could be repeated over and over again at parishes throughout the Diocese. And with these types of gifts so important, it's surprising to me that parish leadership doesn't often ask. The fact is, if you don't ask, it is unlikely that your parishioners will name the parish as a recipient of a bequest from their estate. With this in mind, I urge you to use the bulletin inserts I provide on a regular basis and to encourage the Stewardship Committee or Finance Council members to hold an Estate Planning Seminar at the parish at least every other year. Call me for details.

In addition to bulletin announcements, I have included in this issue another article from Dan Conway. It's about hope. In times of great uncertainty, we (and our parishioners) can easily lose hope about the future. One only needs to look at the distressed economy, continuing job losses, and large bonuses being paid to executives who seemingly helped cause this mess as possible reasons for such concern. As Dan points out in his article, Our Holy Father reminds us, especially in times such as these, that *now* is the time to look to Jesus Christ, our firm hope, for strength.

May God continue to bless you abundantly as we enter this fall season.

God bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Urban". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg Urban

Finding Hope Through Gratitude and Generosity

Pope Benedict XVI's most recent pilgrimage took him to the cities of Prague and Brno in the Czech Republic. During this trip, the Holy Father returned to one of his most consistent themes: hope in Christ.

In one of his homilies the Holy Father affirmed that "history has demonstrated the absurdities to which man descends when he excludes God from the horizon of his choices and actions, and how hard it is to build a society inspired by the values of goodness, justice and fraternity, because the human being is free and his freedom remains fragile."

"In the modern age both faith and hope... have been relegated to the private and other-worldly sphere," said the Pope, "while in day-to-day public life confidence in scientific and economic progress has been affirmed. We all know that this progress is ambiguous: it opens up possibilities for good as well as evil," yet it is "not enough to guarantee the moral welfare of society.

"Man needs to be liberated from material oppressions," he added, "but more profoundly, he must be saved from the evils that afflict the spirit. And who can save him if not God, Who is Love and has revealed His face as Almighty and Merciful Father in Jesus Christ? Our firm hope is therefore Christ."

In troubled times, when the economy is uncertain and when the world's peace and stability are threatened from every side, it's easy to lose hope -- to give in to the temptation to feel lost and alone. As the Holy Father clearly reminds us, now is the time to look to Jesus Christ, our firm hope in times of adversity.

Where do we find Jesus during these difficult days? How will we recognize him?

Our faith tells us that we will find him in the heart of the struggle, in the eye of the storm, wherever people are hurting or in serious need. We find him wherever healing and forgiveness are needed, and wherever kindness and encouraging words are in short supply.

In other words, we find the Lord in the very places where hope is most threatened. We find him in those circumstances that most desperately cry out for liberation -- from material oppressions and from the evils that afflict the spirit. We find him in the inner city, in rural communities, in suburban neighborhoods and in small towns. We find him in every region of the world where there are individuals, families and communities that need our help and encouragement in these difficult times.

In their 1992 pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, the bishops of the United States challenged us to let go of the various "isms" that confront us today: individualism, materialism, socialism, hedonism, consumerism and many more. These are social philosophies that become styles of life -- the so-called lifestyles of the rich and famous. Too easily they become obsessions, or as the Holy Father says, "evils that afflict the spirit." Jesus told us that where our treasure is our heart will be also. (Mt. 6:21) He taught us to be responsible stewards, not obsessive consumers, and he showed us that true happiness and peace are the products of gratitude and generosity, not greed and envy.

In his encyclical *Spei Salvi* ("Saved by Hope") Pope Benedict encourages us to "look to Mary, the greatest witness to hope." We look to Mary because she experienced the confusion and anxiety that we do. She had reason to despair because of the "sword of sorrow" that pierced her heart, but she never gave up hope. Mary was the original Christian steward. She found hope in God's promise that her divine Son would be victorious - in spite of all appearances - over the powers of sin and death. And she held onto that hope in a spirit of gratitude and love no matter what difficulties came her way.

Mary's hope made her the model for Christian hope in every century and the image of the Church in its missionary witness to all peoples and cultures in every time and place throughout human history. We find Christ in the witness of Mary and all the saints, and we find hope in their many, diverse expressions of gratitude and generosity. May Christ our hope challenge and inspire us to be grateful, responsible and generous stewards of all God's gifts -- material and spiritual. Through the intercession of Mary and all the saints, may we find happiness and peace in these times of uncertainty by opening our hearts to the Gospel of hope and charity.

Bulletin Blurbs

The following messages can be appropriately inserted into your weekly bulletin:

DID YOU KNOW...

Some gifts to the parish may actually pay you income? Discover the life income benefits of gift annuities and other charitable gifts. You and your spouse and children may save administration fees and save on taxes by considering a charitable gift. Contact The Catholic Foundation at 815-399-4300 or visit www.foundationrockford.org for more information.

ENDOWED GIFTS

Memorialize a loved one with a gift to create a parish endowment. Your gift will bear your loved one's name, and may be in any amount. It's a beautiful way to pass on our Catholic heritage and remember someone special. Contact The Catholic Foundation at 815-399-4300 to learn more.

SAVE ON ESTATE TAXES

Did you know that your estate can make unlimited gifts to our endowment, and those gifts are deducted before estate taxes are computed? Learn more by contacting The Catholic Foundation at 815-399-4300 or visit www.foundationrockford.org.

Planned Giving / The Catholic Foundation
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