



*Office of Stewardship and Development*  
*Diocese of Madison*  
*First Quarter 2017*

**2017 Annual Catholic Appeal**

“We Will Serve the Lord” is the theme for the 2017 Annual Catholic Appeal. The following are important dates and blackout periods:

Blackout Period Begins	January 28, 2017
Direct Mail to Parishioners	Week of February 20, 2017
Announcement Weekend	March 11-12, 2017
Commitment Weekend	March 18-19, 2017
Follow-Up Weekend	March 25-26, 2017
Blackout Period Ends	April 16, 2017

During the blackout period, there is no fundraising. We ask that each parish follow the above schedule. If there is a conflict, please contact the Vicar General’s office to request a variance from these dates.

Any questions contact Kristen Beckett at [Kristen.Beckett@straphael.org](mailto:Kristen.Beckett@straphael.org) or 608-821-4577.

**2017 Collections**

Holy Land	April 14, 2017
National Combined Collection	May 21, 2017
Respect Life	October 1, 2017
International Combined Collection	October 22, 2017
Bless Our Priests	December 10, 2017

# *Stewardship Bulletin Reflections*

**NOTE:** *Please copy this page or pull it out for the person who prepares your weekly bulletins.*

## **December 11, 2016 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent**

*"You too must be patient. Make you hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand." James 5:8*

Patience is another one of those things many of us struggle with. We want things to go according to our plan and our schedule. Any change brings anxiety and fear. Through daily prayer we better align ourselves with God's will and His plan, which is far better than anything we can come up with on our own.

## **December 18, 2016 - 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent**

*"When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home." Matthew 1:24*

Putting our complete trust in the Lord without expecting anything in return. Striving to put God first in all things and follow Him wherever He may led us. As we prepare for the birth of our Lord, pray for the strength and courage to be a model of discipleship, just as Joseph was.

## **December 25, 2016 - The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)**

*"And the Word became flesh" John 1:14*

Jesus is God's ultimate gift of love to us. The countless other blessings that God showers upon us are nothing compared to the gift of His only Son. The only appropriate way for us to respond to such generous love is with our own generous love. When we dedicate our lives to sharing all the gifts God has placed in our hands, the peace of Christ truly will control our hearts and we will know Christmas joy every day.

## **January 1, 2017 - Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God**

*"And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." Luke 2:19*

Mary is the perfect role model for living a stewardship lifestyle. She listened to God and said "yes" to His invitation to be the Holy Mother of His son. She also trusted in the God's providence on a daily basis. As we start a new year, take time every day to listen to how God is calling you; trust that He has a better plan for you than you could ever imagine.

### **January 8, 2017 - Epiphany of Our Lord**

*“Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” Matthew 2:11*

The image of the Magi kneeling before the infant Jesus and opening their treasure chests for Him is an image that we should all try to follow all year long. In gratitude for all that we have been given, we are called to generously share all of our gifts, not just the ones we pick and choose. God wants us to be the most generous with that one thing that means the most to us.

### **January 15, 2017 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*“Now the Lord has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb...” Isaiah 49:5*

You have to do what God is calling you to do and I have to do what God is calling me to do. Guess what, each of us has been given a different plan! So, stop comparing yourself to others. Don't let envy and jealousy enter your life. Be thankful for the gifts God has given you and generously share them with others.

### **January 22, 2017 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*“He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed Him.” Matthew 4:22*

Just as Jesus called the first apostles, He calls each of us to follow Him, too. Not everyone is called to leave their business or family behind, but we are expected to put God first in everything. Everything from our time in daily prayer, our talent in participating in one of our parish ministries and our treasure to support the financial needs of our parish mission.

### **January 29, 2017 - 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3*

This one confuses people. Replace the word “humble” for “poor” and it makes more sense. People that are humble recognize their dependence on God and trust that He will provide all that they need. Unfortunately, for many of us, pride and ego enters our lives and we think we can live without God. Remember – God first in all circumstances.

### **February 5, 2017 - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16*

The generosity of being a good steward of your gifts has a positive effect on people and it is contagious! Good works encourages more good works. Let your light shine! Be careful to recognize that God is working through you and don't put yourself above the people you have been called to help.

### **February 12, 2017 - 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:20*

The scribes and Pharisees lived according to the letter of the law and they used this to elevate themselves above the other people. Jesus is clear – it's the love that you have in your heart that will get you to heaven. Simply following church rules out of obligation, not love, does not put you on the path to heaven. Attending Mass on Sunday and then gossiping about a fellow parishioner on the parking lot is an example of a modern day Pharisee.

### **February 19, 2017 - 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...” Matthew 5:44*

Love your enemies, easier said than done, no doubt. But, remember, the foundation of stewardship is prayer.

When we are in close communication with God, it opens our heart and it turns our attention away from “me” and moves it towards God and others. It allows us to have a little more empathy for “our enemy”. When we pray for others, even “our enemies”, maybe it softens their hearts as well.

### **February 26, 2017 - 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (material wealth).” Matthew 6:24*

For many people, God and money run “neck and neck” as their first priority. Making money and spending money becomes the center of their life and they actually become a slave to money. The solution – become more generous. Giving money to Church and charity frees us from slavery to money and from making money a “god” before God.

### **March 5, 2017 - 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent**

*"It is written: The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve." Matthew 4:10*

Tempted between the riches and power of this world and service to God, Jesus chose service to His Father. If we wish to truly follow Jesus, we, too, must decide to turn away from power and riches and put God at the center of our lives. How is God calling you to serve?

### **March 12, 2017 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent**

*"Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you." Genesis 12:1*

God calls all of us to leave behind our old ways and to follow Him, placing our complete trust in Him. Some of the old ways that we may have to struggle to leave behind might be materialism, selfishness and greed. Yet God promises to show us a new land and a better way to live.

### **March 19, 2017 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent**

*"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again." John 4:13*

Jesus reminds us that material things, even something as basic as water, can never satisfy us for long. When we build our lives around material possessions we always want more. True Joy and Peace only comes when we follow Jesus; when we become more "God-centered" and less "self-centered".

### **March 26, 2017 - 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent**

*"Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7*

How often do we invest our time, talent and treasure in creating an appearance that does not matter at all to God? We strive to impress with our clothing, home, career, possessions, car and other marks of distinction. But none of these illusions of greatness will impress God. Instead, He will look into our hearts to see how much we loved Him, how much we loved others and how we showed that love by the way we used our time, talents and treasure here on earth.

# *Prayers of the Faithful*

## **December 11, 2016**

That through daily prayer we gain patience and align ourselves with God and His plan for us.

## **December 18, 2016**

That we can put our complete trust in God and become a model of discipleship like Joseph.

## **December 25, 2016**

That we may continue our Christmas giving every day of the year – giving generously out of love and gratitude for the gift of Jesus.

## **January 1, 2017**

That we may see Mary as the perfect model of stewardship by her saying "yes" to the Lord.

## **January 8, 2017**

That, through our generous giving, we may show our gratitude to God for the great gift of sending His beloved Son to save us.

## **January 15, 2017**

That we may faithfully live as God's stewards, fulfilling the plan He had for each of us as He formed us in the womb.

## **January 22, 2017**

That we may faithfully follow Jesus, wherever and whenever He calls.

## **January 29, 2017**

That we strive to put God first in all circumstances.

## **February 5, 2017**

That the good works of our parish ministries encourages others to generously share their gifts.

## **February 12, 2017**

That we truly love for love's sake and love not because of obligation.

**February 19, 2017**

That we find it in our hearts to pray for people that don't always treat us well.

**February 26, 2017**

That through our generosity we keep God first and money second.

**March 5, 2017**

That we may learn the difference between what we want and what we need, trusting that God will provide all that we need.

**March 12, 2017**

That we may give glory to Jesus with our time in prayer, our talent in parish ministry and our treasure supporting our parish mission.

**March 19, 2017**

That we may joyfully use the gifts God has given us to help spread the message of the Risen Christ to all those who need to know our Savior's love and grace.

**March 26, 2017**

That we may have the zeal, dedication and love of the first Christians who shared generously and worked diligently to spread the Gospel message.