**Pastor role for the Annual Bishop’s Appeal**

The Annual Bishop’s Appeal funds the diverse ministries and services that we do best collectively as a diocese, rather than as 82 individual parishes. The work funded by the Annual Bishop’s Appeal enables our diocese to reach across parish boundaries in areas of:

• Evangelization

• Clergy

• Charity & Pastoral Ministries

• Education & Formation

Before the Bishop’s Appeal, the work of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend was financed, in part, by a 13 percent tax on all parish income. In 1987 the first Bishop’s Appeal was initiated and resulted in the reduction of parish tax to six percent on the parish offertory only. The Bishop’s Appeal funds the required ministries and services throughout the diocese and, at the same time, helps to strengthen parishes by reducing the parish assessment tax.

A successful Bishop’s Appeal is also a financial benefit to the parish since all funds contributed over the assigned parish goal are returned to the respective parish. A successful Bishop’s Appeal for your parish means not only success for our diocese, but also success for your parish.

Here is a snapshot of your role, as pastor, in the Annual Bishop’s Appeal. For a more comprehensive overview of all roles, please see the ABA Manual.

There are two categories of donors for the Annual Bishop’s Appeal: general donors and major donors. A major donor gives $1,000 or more to the Bishop’s Appeal in a year. This group of donors comprises half of the total dollar amount raised for the appeal each year. Major donors are invited to a dinner with Bishop Rhoades, usually in late August-there is one dinner held in Fort Wayne, and one dinner held in South Bend (due to COVID, these dinners were not held the past two years, and are again on hold this year, 2022).

The Parish phase is conducted within each parish. A successful parish Appeal is directly related to the enthusiasm and motivation of the Appeal parish leadership, beginning with the Pastor.

Every Pastor is asked to selectively recruit an Appeal Chairperson (or couple) to assist with the process of the Appeal in the parish. The lay leader(s) should be invited to the Appeal Leadership Dinner held in early September.

The Appeal Chair’s main objective is to apply an effective process (presented in this manual) asking everyone in the parish to prayerfully consider a gift to the Bishop’s Appeal. Complete coverage of your parish will result in greater parish participation and a greater amount of funding to support the ministries and services of the diocese, as well as increasing your parish overage.

It is unreasonable to expect success from just one weekend’s effort or one solicitation attempt. Successful parishes attempt to contact each parish household by various means (in-pew ask, follow-up letter, follow-up phone call, pulpit announcements and bulletin reminders, email, parish website and/or parish app).

Your parish keeps 100% of any overage from the Annual Bishop’s Appeal, so we suggest you identify a financial need of your parish and communicate how the overage will be used to your parish family.

Utilize the materials provided and follow the plan. In-Pew solicitation is a very effective approach, as is directing donors to give online.

Remember that no gift is too small (and of course, no gift too large). We would like everyone to participate. Do not suggest a specific amount-simply state that the suggested guideline for generosity is one percent of household income.

## **Volunteer Sunday**

The Pastor should briefly remind the parishioners of:

* Ministries and services supported by the Annual Appeal and why they are important to the life of the Church. (Refer to the Appeal brochure or the ABA website.)
* Specific ways the Appeal has helped your parish.
* Previous successful Appeals allowed for the parish overage to be used for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .
* The Pastor should inform the parishioners that key people have accepted leadership positions at the parish level. Mention names, and thank them in person, from the pulpit and in the bulletin.

**Bishop’s Letter**

Prior to Pledge Sunday, Bishop will send a one-page letter to each parish household, asking for their support of this year's Annual Bishop's Appeal. This mailing will also include a personalized pledge card, an ABA brochure, and a #9 reply envelope.

**In-Pew Solicitation**

In-Pew solicitation is an effective approach to obtaining gifts and pledges for the Appeal; many parishes use this method and have been very successful. If carried out thoroughly, this method increases both the number of donors and the dollars contributed with a minimal amount of volunteer time.

Do the following on Pledge Sunday, September 25, 2022:

* Show the Appeal video.
* On Pledge Sunday, have blank Appeal pledge cards and pens in the pews. Ask the ushers to replenish the supply before each Mass. (If your parish does not have pews, instruct the ushers when to pass out the pledge cards and pens.)
* The Pastor shares brief remarks in support of the Annual Bishop’s Appeal. The Appeal is a means of expressing support for Bishop Kevin Rhoades and the work of Christ throughout our diocese. (Refer to the Appeal brochure.) Ask for a prayerful and generous response.
* The priest or a lay person could provide step-by-step instructions on filling out the pledge cards.
* The ushers are asked to collect the completed pledge cards after people have had enough time to complete them.
* It is vital to remind people that it is important for each family to fill out a pledge card, even if they have chosen to make a small gift. Explain that a completed pledge card will save parish follow-up letter and telephone call. Or, they may go to the ABA website at diocesefwsb.org/aba
* The support and endorsement of the Pastor and chairperson are critical elements for the success of the In-Pew method.

## **Follow-Up**

Follow up is an important part of the Annual Bishop’s Appeal process. It is intended to reach those parishioners in your parish who have not yet turned in an Appeal pledge card. Not all parishioners attend Mass at their home parish on Pledge Sunday, therefore, not all parishioners are asked for a gift to the Appeal. By repeating your request on these follow-up Sundays, many who were absent on Pledge Sunday will be asked to make a gift to the Appeal. Be sure to remind parishioners (from the pulpit and in the bulletin) to complete a pledge card for the following two Sundays after Pledge Sunday, or visit the ABA website to make a pledge or a one-time donation.

After the second Follow-up Sunday, two additional methods of follow up will add to the success rate of your parish’s campaign: follow-up letter from the Pastor and telephone follow up (even if a simple voice mail is left).

**Pastor’s Follow-Up Letter**

A follow-up letter from the Pastor should be sent approximately one month after Pledge Sunday (late-October) to all families who have not completed a pledge card. The follow-up letter may also include supporting materials such as a brochure, intention card, and a return envelope. Invite your parishioners to return their completed pledge card in the offertory collection, or simply mail to the parish office in the return envelope provided.

## **Pastor’s Thank You Letter**

The success of all future Annual Bishop’s Appeal campaigns depends on a human courtesy: thanking people for their generosity. All parishioners who choose to make a pledge to the Annual Bishop’s Appeal need, and deserve, to know that their generosity is appreciated.

Some experts say that we must thank people eight times, in eight different ways. A specific number is not as important as keeping in mind that we cannot say “thank you” enough. We all like to know that we are making a difference in the lives of others. A well-planned, creative “thank you” has potential for expressing such a message.

Thanking people gives us an opportunity to let people know that their gift has impacted the lives of other people within our diocese. It is also a good way to reinforce the stewardship message of gratitude by thanking the donor for sharing **God’s gifts** in service of others.

Every donor to the Appeal should be individually **thanked by the Pastor** with a letter. Also, the entire parish should be thanked publicly and repeatedly from the pulpit and in the bulletin. This will show gratitude to those who sacrificed for the work of the Church, and also implicitly remind those who may not have given to the Appeal.

Please do not neglect this step in your parish Annual Bishop’s Appeal process. You will reap its rewards in future years.

**Questions you may be asked**

Why do we do pledges?

The Annual Bishop’s Appeal emphasizes pledging for ten months, billed by the diocesan business office (or 12-month payments with credit card or electronic transfers). Pledges allow individuals and families the opportunity to consider larger commitments than they could usually consider when making a one-time gift. Experience in past campaigns shows that donors who pledged were able to consider gifts four to five times larger than those who made one-time gifts. Donors who give online are also more likely to give more.

How much should I pledge?

That is entirely up to you. You know your financial situation. The diocese recommends parishioners consider a gift of one percent of their income to the Annual Bishop’s Appeal. Examine your heart and give a prayerful response. When you are at peace about your gift and no longer find yourself making excuses about your gift…when you know in your heart that you have been honest with God…then you have given a gift in gratitude for God’s blessings.

If I do not give, will it affect our parish?

Yes, our parishioners are asked to help us reach our parish goal for the Annual Bishop’s Appeal each year. If our goal is not met, our parish must make up the difference using funds from our regular weekend offertory collection. The good news is any money collected in excess of our assessment is returned to the parish.