

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
St. Januarius'
Ezekiel 18:25-28
Philippians 2:1-11
Matthew 21:28-32
September 25, 2011

CMA

Paul is writing to the Philippians because he has heard that there are differences in faith arising in the community that are causing division.

This division is of great concern to Paul. We don't believe in different gods. We can't pick and choose what to believe or what to practice. We are called to "be of the same mind with the same love."

Paul speaks of the 'attitude of Jesus.' Jesus was with God the Father but was willing to give that up for us. He humbled himself and was obedient to his Father. For this, God exalted him.

As Christians, we are called to have this same attitude of Jesus. Rather than focusing on our "self" we are called to give up some of what we have to help others.

We are not just a bunch of individuals who happen to believe in the same God. We are *one* church. When I say one church, I speak not just of St. Januarius', nor am I referring only to Our Lady of the Lakes. We also belong to the Diocese of Rochester and to the Catholic Church across the world.

Our most direct experience of our faith is often in the church where we worship but as part of something larger, we are called to work together to proclaim the Gospel message and to share God's love to the whole world.

As Christian Stewards, we each do this according to the gifts we have been given. Some are good teachers who share their knowledge of faith. Some are gifted to offer compassionate care. Some are gifted with a good ear for listening. We can use these gifts as individuals and as a community of believers.

For the last fifteen years, Our Lady of the Lakes has gone from a planning group that met to discuss how they could work together in light of the declining number of priests and parishioners

to being *one* parish. It hasn't been easy and discovering how we can work together continues to be a challenge.

One of the areas where we have come together is our annual diocesan appeal (Aka Catholic Ministries Appeal – CMA). Last year we moved from having six separate goals to one combined goal. We also stepped up our efforts to promote the CMA.

The results were incredible. We went from raising around \$36,700 the year before to raising over \$56,000 in one year. Many people increased their contributions. Others who hadn't giving recent years gave. People who had never given gave (including one very large donation.) Coming together as one we met our goal for the first time.

Coming together as one! It fits nicely with what Paul says about unity. It also fits nicely with the theme of this year's CMA, *The Power of Many, Stronger as One.*

Each of us has been given gifts and to do wonderful things. That is the 'power of many.' But we can do even more when we

work together as Christian Stewards giving of our time, talent, and treasure.

While we ask you to contribute financially to the CMA, the point is not to give money. The point is to contribute to something beyond ourselves, beyond Our Lady of the Lakes, to support our diocese as we all work together to proclaim the gospel message and help those in need.

The CMA raises about 60% of the entire budget for the diocese. Some goes to Catholic Charities to support their programs for the needy. Some goes to support hospital and prison chaplains along with college ministers. Some goes to support youth ministry in our diocese.

Some goes to support the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops as they pool the resources to help each diocese in its ministry. Some goes to support the Vatican.

Some of it is used to support us as a parish. The diocese provides us administrative support to keep us up on civil laws and regulations. Our diocese has an office of Evangelization and

Catechesis that supports our parishes and schools in educating our children. They provide resources for our RCIA program for people who wish to become Catholic. They help us provide marriage preparation for couples preparing to marry.

Ask yourself what is God calling you to contribute?

As I mentioned before last year we met our goal for the first time. Each year the diocese calculates the goals based on number of households, past contributions, number of people attending church, and median income data.

The way this works out this year is our goal is actually down about \$500 to \$54,442.

Does that mean we can all give less? Not really. Each year a few parishioners pass away and some might move away decreasing the number of contributors. Of course, hopefully some new people have also joined our parish in the last year.

There may be some people who, because of lost jobs or other changes, might not be able to contribute as much, if at all, this year. Of course, some might be able to give more.

Pray about it. What is God calling you to contribute? It's not about seeing what is left over after you have a lot of fun. Pay your own bills, take care of your own needs, but then give according to what God calls you to give.

Whatever you might be able to give, more, less, or the same it is appreciated.