

Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

This Sunday marks the **6<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Poor**, established by Pope Francis in 2017, to be observed on the 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time each year. As I reflected on his message for this year's observance, and considering our Annual Diocesan Appeal, I found the Holy Father calling to mind this:

*“Jesus Christ... for your sakes became poor” (2 Cor 8:9). With these words, the Apostle Paul addresses the first Christians of Corinth in order to encourage their efforts to show solidarity with their brothers and sisters in need. The World Day of the Poor comes this year as a healthy challenge, helping us to reflect on our style of life and on the many forms of poverty all around us. We are asked to reflect on the summons of the Apostle to keep our gaze fixed on Jesus, who “though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, so that by his poverty we might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9). During his visit to Jerusalem, Paul met with Peter, James and John, who had urged him not to forget the poor. The community of Jerusalem was experiencing great hardship due to a food shortage in the country. The Apostle immediately set about organizing a great collection to aid the poverty-stricken. The Christians of Corinth were very understanding and supportive. At Paul’s request, on every first day of the week they collected what they were able to save and all proved very generous.”*

The long tradition of the Church has been to recognize the needs of those around us and discover ways to meet those needs with Christian love and charity. While every faith community has their particular ministries and services to the poor, the **Annual Diocesan Appeal: One in Hope, One in Mission**, has, for many years, been the primary way in which we, as brothers and sisters across our six counties, come together to offer our care and compassion, our solidarity and support, to those in need. Over the past few years, we know that reaching our goal has become a challenge for some parishes. The recent conversations about the 2023 Appeal structure have brought this to even greater light. While we will be implementing a variety of tools to help make our parishes more successful during the entire 2023 Appeal, we need to also spend a little time addressing the conclusion of the 2022 Appeal.

Pope Francis continued in his message reminding us that *“as for the community of Corinth, after the initial outburst of enthusiasm, their commitment began to falter, and the initiative proposed by the Apostle lost some of its impetus. For this reason, Paul wrote to them, asking in impassioned terms that they relaunch the collection, ‘so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means’” (2 Cor 8:11).* I guess we are in good company. Even in the early days of the Church, enthusiasm could wane, support could shrink. And yet, the words of Saint Paul call us back to the same reality – a greater commitment to the poor. As Paul called for a “collection”, I am asking that we consider doing something like that sometime during the remaining weeks of the 2022 Annual Diocesan Appeal.

I am very happy to announce that this past Wednesday, we reached the **90%** mark of our Annual Diocesan Appeal goal of \$4,000,000. We currently stand at **\$3,600,543** from **13,066** households (*21% of all registered households*). This is wonderful considering where we started back in February. But we still need to do everything we can to get closer to the \$4,000,000 goal. I ask that, we, in those same “impassioned terms”, ask the People of God in our parishes to offer a final gift to the 2022 Appeal. If your parish has reached and surpassed your goal (those shaded in blue) – **THANK YOU!** Perhaps just an invitation to people to consider an additional one-time only gift to the appeal to move the entire mission forward. If your parish has not yet made your goal, do not lose hope. Simply ask everyone who has not yet made a gift to consider a one-time only gift. Whatever they can give - \$50; \$100; or more. Some parishes have asked about actually taking up a special second collection, much like Saint Paul called for. In the spirit of the Corinthian community – please do whatever will work!

The Holy Father concludes by saying, *“May this 2022 World Day of the Poor be for us a moment of grace. May it enable us to make a personal and communal examination of conscience and to ask ourselves whether the poverty of Jesus Christ is our faithful companion in life.”*

May it be just that! Thank you for all you do. I pray that we continue to work together in a spirit of unity, focused on the needs of all, especially the poor among us. God bless you all, Father Jack Lavelle