



FAQ's to help you understand the Appeal and the importance of your participation.

What specifically does the Annual *Catholic Services Appeal* fund?

Your parish is involved with many of the offices, ministries and services coordinated through the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. Some very important services are beyond the resources of any one parish. To meet those needs the **Annual *Catholic Services Appeal*** funds more than 20 offices and 90 ministries. The diocese offers these programs and services to help your parish and the people of the diocese to make our communities better places to worship, live and work. Your gift to the **Annual *Catholic Services Appeal*** makes these ministries possible and it enables our parishes to live out the mission of Jesus Christ. That mission is to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel, to serve our brothers and sisters, and to live a life of community in the Holy Spirit.

I give to my parish, why should I give to the Annual *Catholic Services Appeal*?

Before the **Appeal**, parishes were annually assessed a certain percentage of their offertory income to help support the diocese. This was called a "cathedraticum." The parish paid this out of their general funds. In the late 1980's at the request of our pastors the **Annual *Catholic Services Appeal*** was started. This annual **Appeal** helps our parishes keep more funds for local needs. In other words, your contribution to the **Annual *Catholic Services Appeal*** is helping your parish meet its assessment. If your parish goal is surpassed, then 100% of the overage is returned to the parish. The diocese does not keep it. If your parish does not make its goal, the difference is made up from the regular Sunday offertory.

Why should I support the Church?

We should support the Church because God expects us to be generous stewards of the gifts of His creation, returning to God the first fruits of these gifts. This expectation is clearly expressed throughout the Bible, beginning with the story of Cain and Abel in the Book of Genesis. In Genesis 4:2-5, we read, "Abel became a herder of flocks, and Cain a tiller of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought an offering to the Lord from the fruit of the ground, while Abel, for his part, brought the fatty portion of the firstlings of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor." God was pleased with the nature of Abel's offering since Abel brought "the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions," while Cain offered merely "of the fruit." God wants the best from us, not just our leftovers.

In the Old Testament, the people understood their support for the Temple as giving to the Lord: "The people rejoiced over these free-will offerings, for they had been contributed to the Lord wholeheartedly" (1 Chronicles 29:9). The first century Church described in the New Testament understood the offering of first fruits as part of God's plan for the sanctification of the Church founded by His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. This is in keeping with Jesus' teaching that "whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). Giving to the **Annual *Catholic Services Appeal*** supports the Church in fulfillment of Christ's command.

How much should I give?

The Bible answers this question with the concept of tithing, or giving ten percent. The Church did not create this concept. Tithing is God's own idea, the divinely chosen way to contribute regularly and systematically to His work. Tithing is God's concept of giving. Sacred Scripture mentions tithing forty-six times. The first reference comes in the Book of Genesis, where Abram (as he was known before God changed his name to Abraham), returned victorious from battle. After receiving a blessing from Melchizedek, King of Salem and "priest of God the Most High," the text says that "Abram gave him a tenth of everything" (Genesis 14:20).

While we should give freely without expecting anything in return, Scripture does contain God's written guarantee of rewards for those who tithe, as we read in the Book of Malachi: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, and see if I do not open the floodgates of heaven for you, and pour down upon you blessing without measure!" (Malachi 3:10).

The ten percent tithe may be apportioned as charitable giving in various ways. For several years, the **Annual Catholic Services Appeal** manual suggested the following guide to giving:

- 5% of total income to your parish
- 1% of total income to the **Annual Catholic Services Appeal**
- 4% of total income to other charities

Another approach is used in the Diocese of Wichita, which presents this model of tithing:

- 8% of total income to your parish (of which the parish tithes 10% to the diocese and to outside causes)
- 2% of total income to other charities

Here in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, the consultative bodies to the bishop (College of Consultors, Presbyteral Council, Diocesan Finance Council, Diocesan Pastoral Council and possibly a Diocesan Synod) will be discussing our approach to the biblical concept of tithing as part of the stewardship and discipleship way of life.

In the meantime, Saint Paul provides this guidance for the blessed art of giving: "Everyone must give according to what he has inwardly decided; not sadly, not grudgingly, for God loves a cheerful giver. God can multiply his favors among you so that you may always have enough of everything and even a surplus for good works" (2 Corinthians 9:7-8).

The **Annual Catholic Services Appeal** is an opportunity to return our first fruits in gratitude to God for His gifts to us and for us to share with others.

How will my pledge to the Annual Catholic Services Appeal be collected?

Some people make a payment in full while others choose to make a pledge, payable over seven months. If you choose to check this option of payment, the diocesan Finance Office will send you payment reminders October through April. The Diocese of Springfield in Illinois also offers credit card options including automatic installment payments.