

# *Giving through the CFA.....is giving even more to St. Leo's*



The following is Fr. Jarek's 2014 Catholic Faith Appeal homily.

Earlier this morning I called my parents in Poland and shared with them that I would be speaking at all Masses this weekend to talk about the Catholic Faith Appeal. Instead of using the regular telephone, I used FaceTime. All of you Apple users out there know this is a software application, which like Skype, allows you to make video calls. With the push of a button you can see your loved ones in a video chat no matter how many miles apart you might be. Using my iPad, I call my mom and dad almost every day, and now, with high speed internet, the picture quality is amazing. I often wish this technology had been available 20 years ago when

I moved to the United States. Perhaps my parents and my younger sister wouldn't have missed me so much, and I wouldn't have been so homesick when I left them.

Today my parents enjoy a lifestyle comparable to middle class Americans but in the early nineties, when I left home, we didn't even have a phone. Even though the communist rule had already been gone for two years, the new economic reality was still very harsh. If you remember in my orange story from last year, under communism in Poland our money was worthless because nothing was available to purchase. When communism collapsed, the stores were immediately full of products, but ironically we then didn't have any money to acquire them.

Around that time I had just started my second year of studies and my seminary had to one more increase the fees for room and board. The money I earned the previous summer working on a factory line in Sweden was insufficient to get me through the year. I didn't want to again ask my parents for more help knowing how much they struggled. Besides, I continued to feel guilty for shocking them the year before when I turned down a full scholarship to law school and chose the seminary instead. It's not that my parents weren't supportive of my decision but they were understandably a little bit skeptical. "Son, come again, you want to be what? A priest?" That's when I completely identified with the words of Jesus when he said: "A prophet is not without honor except in his own house."

But when my dream of becoming a priest began to be in jeopardy, God opened a window of opportunity for me. Somehow miraculously, I met the Vocational Director from Orchard Lake Seminary who visited Poland and told me that his Seminary was willing to sponsor my studies if I agreed to become a priest in the United States. And so I did. Later I learned it was actually not the Seminary who paid for my studies but it was you, the Catholics of this Diocese who so generously supported the Catholic Faith Appeal for many years.

My parents tried to stop me from leaving my homeland by applying for a loan, so they could pay my room and board, however they were refused. My mom even sold the only piece of jewelry she had ever owned, a small gold ring she got on her wedding day from her beloved grandma. But everything was happening so quickly and before I knew it I was holding onto a one way airline ticket to America and here I am twenty years later.

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When I spoke with my mom this morning I asked her if she remembered selling her ring and why she did that knowing it wouldn't be enough to pay my expenses. She replied: "Jarek, what do you think? This is what parents do." When I thanked her she said: "It was nothing, you are a priest so you should know that if you do good only to those you love, what reward will you get? But if you do good to those whom you don't even know, that is true Christian love. So make sure to thank your people in your parish."

Today, I do want to thank you, not because my mother told me to, but because your generosity really changed my life. It helped me to fulfill my dream of becoming a priest. You showed me your kindness without even knowing me. That's what the Catholic Faith Appeal is all about. It is about helping people whom we do not even know, whom we will probably never meet but whose lives we are able to touch. Through the various programs of the CFA, we not only train new priests but we catechize children and adults. On a daily basis, we feed the hungry, we shelter the homeless, and we assist the oppressed. When we do that, there is no doubt that we fulfill the greatest of all the commandments, namely, the commandment of love.

## Paying our assessment directly through the CFA is financially prudent and the most efficient way to help our parish.

However, contributing to the CFA is not only helping other people but also helping St Leo's. Every year parishes in the Diocese of Venice make a required contribution to financially support our Diocesan wide ministries and programs. This required assessment is locally known as our "goal." The Church law calls it simply a "tax." It is calculated at a rate of 26% of the annual parish ordinary income. Our goal at St. Leo this year is the same as last year - \$420,000. This amount is our parish obligation and the Catholic Faith Appeal is a means by which we can satisfy that obligation.

Last year we were very successful in reaching our goal thanks to your generosity and financial prudence. You understood that the best way to pay our obligation was to pay it directly through the CFA. And I am very grateful for that because you not only helped to pay our assessed amount but you helped me to sleep better at night. But in all seriousness, you saved the parish a lot of money by simply paying out tax bill directly. Last year our goal was \$420,000 and we exceeded it by \$160,000 and this amount has been returned to us assessment free. Had you chosen to pay this into our regular collection it would have been assessed and our tax bill would have gone up by almost \$42,000, leaving us owing \$462,000 instead of \$420,000.

Please help us this year to once again reach and even exceed our goal. The pledge cards are in the pews. You can fill them out now and place them in the collection basket today. Or you can take them home and bring them next Sunday or mail them to the Diocese or our church office. Paying our assessment directly through the CFA is financially prudent and the most efficient way to help our parish. But more importantly, our gift to the Catholic Faith Appeal has the power to impact the lives of many people who seek spiritual nourishment or temporal services from the Church every day. We may never meet them, but let's keep in mind that when we help those whom we do not even know, we certainly do fulfill the greatest of all the commandments.

