

Miss Sarah Donovan

Impact of Annual Catholic Appeal

The Annual Catholic Appeal is at the center of Catholicism. This program aims to collect resources from members of the Church and distribute them back to those in need. Donating to the Catholic Church returns the gifts that the Lord has given us and strengthens our bonds with our fellow brothers and sisters. It is important to give back because God has given us all of our talents and we must repay Him through charitable contributions. The funding for this organization goes toward helping people living in poverty, pro-life, social justice issues, Catholic education and more. This supports the soul of Catholicism, and everything that makes the community so strong. Without this organization we would not be able to function as well as we do today.

An example of this institution at work would be St. Patrick Center. They are a housing first organization whose goal is to fix the issue of chronic homelessness. To achieve that goal, they aim to house the poor before they fix any other issues that may be causing them to be homeless. By helping others improve their living conditions, it greatly enhances the neighborhoods where we live. They believe that everyone, regardless of social status or wealth, should be treated with an equal amount of care and compassion. This is the same attitude that the Annual Catholic Appeal embodies with their approach. As a member of the Catholic faith, humble donations and charity are core beliefs and extremely important to achieve God's wishes. In order to feel fully fulfilled yourself, you have to help others less fortunate than yourself.

This attitude must be carried throughout every aspect of one's life. This quality can be referred to as stewardship. Stewardship can be defined as "the individual's responsibility to

manage their life and property with proper regard to the rights of others” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). In this case, being devout to the Catholic faith even through question and angst demonstrates this great quality. Our goal is to give without question and to give every single extra part of what we have that is not directly needed by ourselves. To illustrate, in the book of Tobit, Tobit tells his son to "Give to the hungry some of your food, and the naked some of your clothing. Whatever you have left over, give away as alms; and do not let your eye begrudge the alms that give" (Tobit 4:16). This theme is present in the Annual Catholic Appeal. It is our duty to give without question and without begrudgement, for our faith calls us to do so.

For me, stewardship means working towards a common goal for the betterment of an aspect of the community. For instance, I used to teach martial arts to people who have special needs. Our goal was to give them an opportunity to participate in a “normal” activity in which we treated them as equals. Whether child or adult, they were able to learn a valuable skill that is good for their health and enriches their lives with practice in a social setting. Learning the skill of martial arts gives them a sense of mastery and success which carries over into their daily lives. Watching my students rise through the ranks throughout the months and the years of teaching this program made me feel more complete as a person. Serving this population gave me a better understanding of my purpose and developed my character. Just the simple act of spending one hour a week with my students helped their progress, and in return I was able to feel a sense of accomplishment from their advancement.

Being face to face with people helps remind us that we are all human beings and shows the importance of relating with others. In the digital age, it increasingly becomes harder to connect with people. Screens take away our humanity and make it seem as if these problems are

not real and actually happening. It is easier not to help others in need because you do not actually see them. Before I recently moved here from Seattle, I saw a homeless lady who was living in a bathroom stall at a park. Seeing all of her possessions in two trash bags put everything into perspective for me. I was aware that there is a large homeless population in Seattle, but I never realized how dire the situation was until I saw it with my own eyes. This made me wonder what more I could do to help people, and is a living example for me of how the ACA helps the community.

I also experienced homelessness when my church hosted the Tent City (homeless community in Seattle). The individuals who lived near the church were infuriated by this decision to take in this homeless population in fear of it being “dangerous”. Unfortunately, some of the people who opposed this were parishioners. Even though this happened a few years ago, I still very clearly remember my priest’s reaction. He told everyone that it was our duty to welcome them with open hearts because Jesus was calling us to help these people. He made a big impression on me because he taught me to Live Jesus when others were not. He was a living example of what Jesus would do, speaking up for what was right when no one else would. The members of the church willingly made meals for them and donated clothes to them purely out of the goodness of their own hearts. My Girl Scout troop and I went and distributed these items to the people living in tents in the parking lot of my church. I was nervous because of the negative stigma built on the homeless, but it ended up being a mind-changing experience for me. Handing the food and clothing to these people made me realize that homeless people are no different than myself or anyone else. Seeing them in person humanized them to me and made it seem very real

and not just an idea. This is where the Annual Catholic Appeal plays a very vital role because there will always be people less fortunate no matter where you go.

Overall, this program has a massive impact on the Church and many that are affected by poverty. The experience of witnessing homelessness in multiple communities made me realize how real this issue is, and how important the effort to improve the situation really is. It is easy to overlook the matter when you are unaware and have not experienced it. This is why the Annual Catholic Appeal calls us to participate in efforts to help the community through donation. They remind us that it is our duty to help our brothers and sisters who are less fortunate than ourselves.