

April 11, 2010

On this Sunday we celebrate the Octave of Easter. The Resurrection of Jesus is the central mystery of our faith, a mystery so great that we celebrate and seek to grasp its full meaning for 50 days until Pentecost.

We call this Sunday Divine Mercy Sunday. God's mercy and love are so great that He sent His eternally begotten Son into the world. Jesus suffered rejection, condemnation, and death for us that we might know the depth of God's mercy and love. Jesus passed through death to Resurrection conquering sin and death and enabling us to share in God's very life and love on this earth and then enjoy eternal blessedness forever in the life to come.

In the Gospel proclaimed at this Sunday's Mass, Jesus, on Easter night, passed through the locked doors where the disciples were gathered for fear of the Jews and greeted them, "Peace be with you." He said it a second time and then continued, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

Jesus sends us who are the Church, His living Body, to continue His mission of bringing the compassionate love of God to the people of our time with the power of the Holy Spirit.

As Church, the enormous gift and challenge for each one of us is to accept God's merciful love, live in that love, and share the saving, healing, reconciling love of God with others. Empowered with the Holy Spirit, we attempt to do exactly that in our own personal lives and relationships, in and through our parishes and other institutions, and together as a diocese.

This week we begin our annual Catholic Services Appeal (CSA). The CSA is a combined effort of all the Catholic people of our diocese to support and fund ministries and services that continue the mission of Jesus in ways that are

beyond the reach of individual parishes. Every contribution is used totally and exclusively for Church services and support.

Funds from the Catholic Services Appeal form and educate future priests, deacons, and lay ecclesial ministers who will serve in our parishes. They support services that make our Catholic schools, religious education programs, youth ministry, and liturgical celebrations more effective locally. Your gift to the CSA provides significant funding for Catholic Charities which serves families in need of financial, emotional, and spiritual assistance – the kind of help that individual parishes are unable to provide.

Very importantly, the CSA enables us to stand in solidarity, not only with the people of our diocese, but also with people beyond. How? In addition to the several second collections that are taken up in our diocese, there are eight additional collections taken up in parishes across the country. In our diocese, the CSA is your means to support the purposes of those eight additional collections. They include assisting the Holy Father in funding his charities, providing for the Indian and African American missions in our country, providing for retirement of nuns, brothers, and priests who have served us faithfully throughout their lives, and supporting the suffering Christians in the Holy Land.

Moreover, parishes that exceed their target receive rebates that enable them to offer additional programs and ministries or to make much-needed improvements to the church or school buildings through which they extend the compassionate love of Jesus.

Our theme for the 2010 Catholic Services Appeal is “Received with Gratitude, Returned with Generosity.” Our very life, faith, and all other good gifts have come freely from our good and merciful God. Scripture calls us to use our

gifts as responsible stewards in behalf of others. The annual Catholic Services Appeal is a splendid opportunity for us to share God's blessings with others.

Attending to Jesus' admonition in Sunday's Gospel, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you," please be generous so that we together might bring the peace and hope of God's love to others through the many, many ministries made possible through the CSA.