

TRINITY SUNDAY – C (June 12, 2022)
(ArchdioceseOne appeal)

We celebrate on this Trinity Sunday what we might call the feast day of God—God who is One, but within that oneness is also ‘three-ness’—the three divine Persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Catechism refers to the Holy Trinity as the ‘central mystery of Christian faith and life’ and ‘the most fundamental and essential teaching’. The Trinity, then, is the very essence of God: an eternal communion of love into which we are invited and baptized. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, we are able to share forever in that communion of love. That is our ultimate goal, what God made us for. But in the meantime we live in this world in all its nitty-gritty details...and Jesus established his Church in this world to remind us of that goal and help us strive for it. That Church has a whole lot of work to do in this world, and we are called to help in that task.

As you know, we are in the midst of the ArchdioceseOne special appeal, and we here in Holy Rosary Cluster are in the first group of parishes and clusters to go through the whole process. Archbishop Jackels has asked us pastors of this first group to devote homily time this weekend to speak about this appeal. You know that there are four main needs to be addressed:

1. **strengthen our seminarian education funding system.** The archdiocese pays for the great bulk of the cost of educating our seminarians; if they had to pay all those costs themselves, it would be prohibitive for many of them. There is a seminarian education endowment fund, but the annual return from that fund regularly falls short of meeting those expenses which sometimes run in excess of \$700,000. And like everything else these days, those education costs are going in only one direction—up. Thus the need to add to that endowment fund so as to provide a more stable and reliable funding source for those seminary costs.

2. **strengthen the priest pension plan to support our retired priests.** Part of the compensation that we priests receive is health care and a monthly stipend at retirement. Retired priests need to pay out-of-pocket for major items like room and board that are provided for active priests, and the relatively small salary we active priests receive doesn’t allow us to put much into savings for retirement. The archdiocese conducted a successful appeal in 1998 to strengthen the fund to provide for our retired priests. But the combination of rapidly rising medical costs and the retired priests living longer—and thereby drawing their pension benefits for a longer period of time—has led to that pension plan now being underfunded.

3. **do critically-needed repairs on the Cathedral of St. Raphael.** The cathedral, the mother church of our archdiocese, is in a state of serious disrepair—leaky roofs, water runoffs due to the lay of the land around the cathedral which leads to flooded basements, the need for tuckpointing to keep the exterior bricks from falling out, to name just a few. The cathedral building is over 160 years old, and so the need for major repairs is not surprising. I was at the cathedral two weeks ago for the ordinations of our new deacons and priest. We could clearly see in the social hall lots of evidence of ceiling deterioration; it looked like big chunks could fall any time. It is really unsightly and frankly embarrassing...and it is dangerous. The need is truly dire.

Some have asked why the members of the cathedral parish don't take care of those problems. Those parishioners are certainly part of this appeal, and will also be asked to help with those costs. But the cathedral really is a uniquely important church in our archdiocese—it is the seat of the archbishop's authority as chief shepherd of all 30 counties in our archdiocese and not just the city of Dubuque. Our life and role as Catholic Christians is not limited by the physical boundaries of this parish or cluster—we are all part of the archdiocesan church, and thus we all share in the responsibility of supporting its mission. And that includes maintaining the cathedral, the most important church in our archdiocese—and to which we all belong in a very real way, even if we live some distance away..

4. strengthen Catholic Charities in its work to provide immigration legal services. First, I know that the whole immigration question is one that raises strong opinions and emotions on all sides. Let's start with some basics. Jesus made it very clear that we will be judged in major part on how well or poorly we respond to the needs of the poor and afflicted among us. The Catechism reminds us that the more prosperous nations are obliged under Christian charity to welcome those from other lands seeking safety and to help with the means to provide for their families which they can't do in their places of origin. The Catechism also reminds immigrants that they 'are obliged to respect with gratitude ...the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens' (n. 2241).

What does that mean in our particular circumstance? For one thing, it means that immigrants have a right to seek help to see if they can qualify for legal status. And that's just what Catholic Charities is trying to do—to help the migrants and refugees among us, who so often are fleeing from extreme poverty, violence and natural disasters in their homelands. Our archdiocese has seen more and more migrants and refugees come here, and from literally all over the world. The need for legal services is only increasing as their numbers increase. Catholic Charities helps them work within our immigration structures and laws in order to help them and their families maintain the dignity and rights that are theirs as beloved children of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ as are we all.

You recently received or will soon receive a letter from the archbishop inviting you to take part in this appeal [see also the folder in your pews—show]. That letter describes the variety of options for making your gift—e.g. a monthly or yearly pledge or a one-time gift. I will be making a pledge to this appeal; I cannot and will not ask you do what I refuse to do myself. And remember: you can designate your gift to go to just one or two or three of those four specific needs. All four needs are genuine; all four are certainly worthy of our generous response. Nonetheless, you can designate your gift in that more specific way. If you do not make a specific designation, your gift will be distributed as needed among the four goals.

Please pray for the success of this appeal, and pray in particular for the Holy Spirit's guidance as you make your own decision on responding to this appeal. St. Paul told the Romans in our second reading: "the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." God, the eternal loving communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the first lover, the first giver. How will we each respond to this appeal in gratitude for what God has first done for us and for what he offers us in his kingdom of love and never-ending joy?