



Brothers and sisters, I'd like to talk to you about something very briefly, but which is very important. And I'd prefer to speak plainly about it, because that's just how I like to go about these things—I'm not a salesman—and also because I'm comfortable with you. I don't think I have to pretend very much anymore around you.

I need to talk to you about the Bishop's Annual Appeal for Catholic Ministries. This weekend is "Commitment Weekend," the weekend we ask you to make a pledge to support the wider ministries of the Diocese of Dallas. This year we're not making you sit through an audio recording; we just want to talk to you plainly about this appeal and its value—which, of course, you know very well.

The Bishop's Annual Appeal helps raise funds for Catholic education throughout the Diocese—scholarships for our Catholic high schools; support for the Notre Dame School, that beautiful educational community, helping children with developmental disabilities. It helps to educate our seminarians in formation, care for our priests throughout the length of their ministries. The Bishop's Annual Appeal also helps Catholic Charities, our Pro-Life ministries, campus ministries, evangelization ministries, prison ministries, youth and young adult and family ministries.

Through these ministries, lives are changed every year—hope in the form a rosary for a person incarcerated; a meal and a helping hand to someone who walks through the doors of Catholic Charities. For young people in this city: we're going after them with a word of hope. Get online and look up an event called "The 635." This Appeal helps bring Christ to young adults, brilliant people who need hope. The money taken up this weekend will make a direct impact on how this city is evangelized, helping it become more and more a city of faith, hope, and love.

I believe in the Bishop's Annual Appeal; I believe in its value. And I know you're asked a lot for a lot—and for a lot of worthy causes and institutions. But every year, this one moves me to speak up, particularly. Because I see the good it does, and it moves me very much.

As we grow as a community of belonging, I will talk about giving from time to time—because it matters. Because being a giving person is fundamental to being a Christian. Read the letters of Saint Paul: "as you excel in every respect, in faith, discourse, knowledge," he said, "excel in this gracious act also." Out of our surplus, he said, we should help others. For Paul, that meant Christians in Jerusalem suffering famine; for us, it means our brothers and sisters in this city and across this Diocese—and not just Catholics. Paul was clear that this type of giving—not to a building or even a "cause"—is a way to imitate Christ who became poor for our sake.¹

I believe in the Bishop's Annual Appeal because of the good it clearly does, and because it is so clearly an appeal made in the purest spirit of the New Testament. But I also believe in it because I believe in this city, and because I believe in you.

I was originally a Tarrant County man; I didn't really like Dallas at all, barely tolerate you, to be honest, like any proud Texan west of Arlington. But then I moved here; but then I got to know you and see you, meeting some of the very best people in this city. And I'm here to tell you: this city

¹ 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

has some of the finest people I've ever met. This city is full of people with heart, people who have hearts for each other. This is a city full of people who give and who help and who care. Dallas is a beautiful city, and it's because it's full of beautiful people who help and who give.

And let me tell you something else: Catholics are in the middle it! Catholics—what they do, motivated by their faith—they're in the middle of it. This city is more beautiful because of what Catholics do as Catholics—day in and day out. That's another reason why I believe in this Annual Appeal—because it helps us help make Dallas beautiful. And it's working!

And, of course, St. Rita Catholic Community is in the middle of it too. Last year only one other parish in the Diocese gave more to the Bishop's Annual Appeal than we did, and I think they cheated! Every year, you go above and beyond what's asked of you. I can't tell you how proud that makes me, but also how unsurprised I am by it.

Here, let me get a little personal. I came to St. Rita in 2009, a convert out of the Episcopal Church, and you had no idea who I was. Yet from that very first moment, this community welcomed me and took care of me and my family with love and support, so much that it has changed my family forever. This community has been pure love for me and my family since the beginning. And so, I'm just not surprised by your generosity—just thankful. Please know how grateful I am every day for you. This community saved us.

But so did the Diocese of Dallas. I spoke with Cardinal Farrell last weekend; I can barely keep it together when I talk to him, for all that he did to bring my family here and to see to it we were taken care of. He moved the mountains; he welcomed me and made it okay. He supported me, gave my family welcome and life. And again, I'm just grateful. I'll always be grateful.

It's why I believe in this Annual Appeal, why I'm not bashful about it all. Because a strong Diocese can do wonderful things. A strong Diocese can change lives, even save lives. This is a good time to be a Catholic in Dallas, an inspiring time. But it takes all of us, each one of us. And that's what this is all about.

The Diocese asks us to raise \$302,000. You exceeded it last year by a lot, and I know you can exceed it again. I know it's not fun to get asked for money while at Church, but Christians have been doing it since the Bible, and that's because it's important. As I said, it's part of being a Christian, being willing to help. And this is how you do it. So, let's help together. *Amen.*

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