



Extension's Appeal

In my recorded homily to launch the 2016 Bishop's Annual Appeal I referred to the financial support we receive from Catholic Extension. Donations to Extension have been rising; but so have requests for help from the over 90 dioceses throughout the country which rely on Extension as we do in the Diocese of Baker. And Extension cannot fund them all.

To extend their donors' generosity as broadly as possible, Extension must make hard choices between very real needs in all the dioceses linked to its network of support. Quite understandably, therefore, Extension has asked bishops (1) to keep this mounting national pressure in mind when requesting grants for parishes in their dioceses and (2) to try to meet more of our needs ourselves by increased local fundraising.

For its part, Extension is shifting away from providing direct support for building and maintenance projects (though they continue to fund these) to grants of services which help dioceses get better at taking care of ourselves.

To encourage the Diocese of Baker along this path, Extension gave us a two-year grant of free professional consultant's services to enhance the Bishop's Annual Appeal. This assistance resulted in markedly increased contributions each of the past two years. Nonetheless, we still received nearly as much from Extension (22% of our operating income) as we did from the Bishop's Appeal (30%).

Since the Diocese of Baker does not have an open-ended line of credit with Catholic Extension, as bishop I must pay attention to the total amount which Extension grants to parishes within the Diocese each year. And I must do so with an eye toward grants we will need to seek a year or two down the road (of which I have several in mind as I write). Three or four \$20,000 - \$30,000 parish grants each year significantly augment the total annual assistance Extension gives the Diocese. If Extension's grant-givers, acutely conscious of the pressing needs of other dioceses, judge that Baker has reached a reasonable "limit" of funding in a particular year, our requests for substantially more costly and important projects might be denied or delayed.

To guard against that possibility, Catholic Extension must know that the Diocese of Baker can be counted on to ask for help, not just with what we want, but with what we really need. With such a reputation our requests are more likely to be taken seriously and disposed of favorably. Several years ago when a parish was unable to comply with (quite reasonable) conditions for a sizeable grant, we returned it without being asked to. In explanation, I told the Extension grantors, "I'd rather have your trust than your money."

Their trust in us will grow to the extent that we make a serious effort to increase the resources we generate within the Diocese to meet our needs and lessen our dependence on Extension's generosity.

We have entered a new world of grant-giving, and our relationship with Catholic Extension is one with many moving parts. These days an individual parish's request for Extension's assistance must be considered more carefully than before in light of the needs of the Diocese

as a whole. That is why we are making such efforts to build up the Bishop's Annual Appeal. And that is why your support for it is important as never before.