

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 4, 2009

It was the end of July when a small group of parishioners and I met with our fundraising consultant. I was asked to kickoff the public phase of our campaign to raise funds for our greatly needed church and parish center repairs. I bemoaned the fact that Fr. Mike wasn't here. This was a theme on which I thought he was particularly eloquent. But somehow God placed me here instead of Fr. Mike.

Like many of you, perhaps the thought of raising one million dollars in these difficult times seemed rather daunting. Amidst the painful reality of job loss, dwindling savings, and an uncertain future, God's providence and faithfulness remain. As I prayed that weekend in July, and dealt with my feelings of inadequacy, I was struck by the psalm refrain. It seemed to resound within me as we repeatedly echoed the words in song: "The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs." That same weekend the Book of Kings relayed the story of Elisha, the prophet and his desire to feed hungry people with seemingly inadequate food....strikingly reminiscent of the multiplication of the loaves and fish where the crowd was miraculously fed when they dug into their pockets and shared the bit that they'd brought along to sustain them on their journey.

Like the Israelites of old, we, too, the community of St. Catherine of Siena, are on a journey. It's a journey of faith which began some 50 years ago when our predecessors, our founding members, dug deep into the well of their faith, not knowing where it would lead, but they trusted in the God of their hearts, the God whom they experienced as faithful. We stand today on their shoulders. We draw from their strength and their courage to turn the next page and begin a new chapter, a chapter that calls us to reflect on our blessings and to remind ourselves of who

we are, of the seeds of faith that were implanted within us, to draw on that reservoir and trust the God in whom we believe.

This fundraising campaign that we embark upon is not just about amassing money to fund critically needed repairs – more importantly, to me, it is about deepening our relationship with God; it's about seizing an opportunity to grow in our faith; it's about who we are as a community of faith and in whom we trust; it's about taking a journey, and taking that journey together. It's about investing in our community.

... a community where last year a third grader dreamt of helping children in our sister parish in the Dominican Republic by conducting a garage sale, where parents listened to and shared that dream, where a family faith group came together and helped bring that child's dream to a reality.

... a community that compelled a visitor to send us a letter of prayerful support when Fr. Mike was dying because of the love she witnessed, the bondedness she experienced as we listened to news of his worsened condition, that moved her, like us, to tears and embraces.

... a community in whom I've found a home when I struggle with our church leaders whose vision seems short-sighted in planning for our future; a community where I find hope when I support our church's stance against abortion, but am ashamed and embarrassed that we cannot seem to make a connection and speak with the same level of gospel conviction against the atrocity of war and other life issues ... a community that vitalizes and challenges me to live out my faith.

... a community where a grad student from a European country, who'd only stayed with us one year, but who shared his gifts extensively with us during that time, said to me as he was leaving in July: "This is my home. I will never forget this community."

This is what I wish for each of you – whether long-time parishioners, newcomers, or with us for only a short stay – that you find in us a nurturing home, a community where you are welcomed, supported and challenged on your life journey, a place where you are enlivened and can grow in your ability to live out the gospel message.

So what am I asking of you – I'm asking you to invest in this community. To date, over 50 of our parishioners have been working behind the scenes to ensure the success of this fundraising campaign. We have invited some members among us to make early gifts to start us off, to lay a firm foundation and provide momentum for our campaign. They have stepped forth in faith, with great generosity and responsiveness; as of today we have 50 pledges of \$462, 805...and we are well on our way to success.

I'm asking you today to take the rest of this month to pray, to reflect on how God has blessed you, to take time to consider what it will mean for you to step out in faith, what level of sacrifice you are able to make on behalf of the parish. That will be different for each of you. We are not looking for equal giving but equal sacrifice, that your gift in some way requires a stepping out in faith.

Toward the end of the month you will receive pledge cards in the mail and on Commitment Sunday, Oct. 31/Nov. 1, when we ask that you make your

commitment, your pledge, which is payable over a three-year period ... payable in any way, shape, or form.

During this month, ponder the story of the widow's mite, how others made offerings from their surplus wealth, but the widow, instead, contributed from her poverty and need. What is your widow's mite?

What would please me more than anything is that each of us sitting in this church participates in this campaign – that you recognize that you matter – that every gift counts, no matter how large or small. To our young children and our teens, I invite you to participate. What is a sacrifice for you? Might it mean skipping a meal at McDonalds or passing on a movie? To our grad students who might be struggling to make ends meet and here for only a year, it may be a one-time gift of \$10. This is for you to determine, only you know what it means for you to step out in faith. Accept this moment in the history of our church as an opportunity for you to grow in your faith. I am convinced that if we all do that, we will have enough, in fact, more than enough to support our critical needs. “The hand of the Lord feeds us; God will answer our every need.”

Sister Mary