

Pastor's Corner - Charitable Donations - January 22, 2012

Our Saanich Peninsula Parish faith community has always been very generous in reaching out to help the poor and people in need. Your generosity has reached out to local people in need through your blue envelopes with contributions to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Then there are five regular special collections (yellow envelopes) during the year for a number of church related needs in addition to special collections aimed at a particular emergency situation. In the past few years you have given generously in order to come to the aid of people affected by natural disasters such as the tsunami in Indonesia, the turmoil in Darfur, the hurricane disaster in New Orleans, the earthquake in Haiti, the floods in Pakistan, the drought in the Horn of Africa/East Africa, a special wheelchair for a child in Mexico, an operation for a child in the Sudan, etc. Each year a special luncheon and bake and other items sale brings in more than \$10,000 yearly for Hanti Sidra with small projects in Eritrea and the Southern Sudan. Then there is the Parish's long-time support for people trying to start a new life at Anawim. We could go on and on. Sorry, if I have forgotten other important fundraising efforts. All of this is in addition to what people give at home in gifts to all kinds of other worthy causes, such as the local Food Bank, Red Cross, Chalice, etc.

Just as individuals and families need to incorporate within their yearly budgets money to be given to various charities, so **as a faith community** we need to look beyond our own local parish needs to include the needs of others. The Diocesan Assessment and the Annual Diocesan Appeal are a reminder to us that we belong to the larger Catholic community on the Island. For many years now our Parish community **as a community** has also put aside in our yearly budget a significant amount of money (since 2010 this has been \$25,000) to be given to groups and organizations which reach out to the poor. For the last eight years our Parish Pastoral Council and the Finance Committee have devised a way to distribute this amount on three levels: international, provincial/national and local level. We have tended to favour International organizations with a higher percentage because our Canadian Dollar can do so much more in poorer countries. In the past we have posted information on the various groups. If you would like more information on a particular organization, let us know and we will try to provide it. This weekend you will find a chart in the foyer of the church which shows donations in 2011 and two previous years.

We have received thank you letters from a number of the groups, e.g., Covenant House, Anawim, Queen of Peace Monastery, etc. Bishop Gary Gordon of Whitehorse (Catholic Missions in Canada) said: "Thank you for your commitment and love of the Church." This northern diocese has 7,500 people in 22 missions with 7 missionary priests and many dedicated lay missionaries like Mike and Tina Girard with 4 year-old Jonathan "who became a young pastoral animator bringing comfort to the grieving community after a recent tragedy."

Sr. Nini Rebollos, OP with Susan Cordova of the Pasobolong women centre and Imelda Alejo of the parents group in Pasobolong, Mindanao, Philippines (affected by recent floods): "Yes, we received the funds last Friday from Manila to Zamboanga Metrobank branch. The \$2,000 became 85,242 pesos. This will be utilized for the programs of women development - values formation & retreat with the community as well as 20% for the on-going construction of the extension of their kitchen where the women produce delicacies for market in shops downtown. Thank you to all the parishioners of Saanich Peninsula RC Parish in Sidney and the Dominican Community through you, Fr. Rolf who shared this amount for our mission with the women and families in the south. May our common mission to God's people be blessed and strengthened in 2012. Very grateful for your support."

Shalom!

Fr. Rolf, OP