

27th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Cycle B

October 7, 2012 All 8 Masses

Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

Michael

There's a little story about a young man named – oddly enough – Michael.

Michael woke up one Sunday, tired and grouchy. He blurted out to his mother, *"I'm not going to church this morning."*

His mother asked why not. Michael snapped back, *"I just don't want to go."*

His mother continued, *"Well, there has to be some reason."* Again, Michael responded, *"I just don't feel like it today."*

His mother came back again. *"Look Michael, that's ridiculous."*

"Besides, you have no choice. You're the pastor, so get moving."

Why I Am Here Today

Well, unlike the Michael in the story, today I am happy to be here with you.

And yes, I am giving my annual talk on the offertory collection. But what makes this enjoyable for me is that fundamentally it is really about Saint Margaret's and the faith community we have developed together.

Programs, Services, Opportunities

For example, today one of the things I think about is our marriage preparation program. Jesus in today's gospel says that the bond between husband and wife is to be as enduring as God's love is for us.

Here at Saint Margaret's we try to promote this by making marriage preparation a priority. We have 18 sponsor couples who prepare other couples for marriage in a personal, one-on-one setting.

Then we priests and deacons plan the wedding ceremony with the couples and make this an experience of faith. It is a helpful and enriching program.

Today I also think of the FiRE House that we opened this past year. The parish for many years has owned a ranch home next to the Saint Margaret property.

With a few changes and a lot of splashy, bright paint, we converted that into a center for our high school youth. Some of our young adults named this the FiRE House and that stands for Finding the Road to Emmaus.

Today I am also thinking of our outreach to those in need. We host 5 Twelve-Step substance abuse programs here, including one for families – called Families Anonymous.

Today I also recall a middle-age man who thanked me for our ministry to the hospital. When he was in Upper Chesapeake, each day one of our Eucharistic Ministers visited and brought him Communion and he found that so very helpful as he went through his treatments.

I could say a lot more about our parish, like the 31 adult faith groups, the 900 children and youth in faith formation, and the 700 children in our school. We can be very proud of so many things.

Offertory Giving

Now, of course, we do need financial support for all of this.

You have been quite generous and I am very grateful to all of you. Without your generosity, all of this would not be possible.

This weekend, I am asking us to renew our financial commitment. Our budget for this year that we began on July 1 is balanced at \$3 million.

It is well-thought out and tight, almost the same bottom line as last year's. So here is what I am thinking and what I want to ask.

My Request

We are all aware of the troubled economy in our country.

So I assume that some of us because of personal circumstances will not be able to contribute as much as we have been giving. And I assume that some of us will be able to maintain our present level of giving but not increase it.

Given that, I am asking those of us who can to increase our giving to the offertory by 3% or even more if that is appropriate for us. This will enable us to continue all of our programs and services and ministries.

I also ask all of us, regardless of our level of giving, to complete a commitment card. This card is a good-faith expression of what we intend to give and it also enables us to make sure that our budget is realistic.

I mailed the card with my letter to you this past week and maybe you have already completed it. If not, I would ask that you complete a card right now and drop it in the collection basket – there are cards and pencils available.

Conclusion

I thank you for your consideration of my request.

As I leave, I am reminded of another anecdote. One day, a little girl and her mother stopped into church.

The mother said that she wanted to pray for just a few minutes. So the mother knelt and prayed and the little girl was trying her best to be patient.

Finally, she tapped her mother on the shoulder and said, "*When will that red light up there turn green so we can go?*" Well, it hasn't turned green, but it is time for me to go.