

2011 Our Catholic Appeal Homily

Bishop John Noonan

My Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

My name is John Noonan. I was recently installed on December 16 as Bishop of the Diocese of Orlando. I am happy and privileged to serve you. In these few short months in which I have had the opportunity to meet some of you, I am inspired by your faith.

As a faith-filled people, we are always growing in our relationship to God; understanding the spirit of God's law, which calls us to a much fuller way of relating to God and one another. As we listen to the proclamation of the Word, we hear that twice in the first reading, we are asked to choose; to choose to live by the "immense" and "all-seeing" wisdom of God. Rather than making choices because of personal convenience or to our own liking, we are called to build the Kingdom of heaven by making choices that lead us to the fullness of life.

I am reminded, my brothers and sisters in Christ, of the times that you, in your own lives, fulfill the law and serve the Lord. Each year, during our Catholic Appeal, you serve the Lord with your whole heart, your whole mind and your whole strength through your sacrifice to help those in need.

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus does not abolish the law, but asks us to redefine the way we love and relate to God and each other. As disciples participating in Our Catholic Appeal, we are called to look at the spirit of the law so that we realize a fuller way to grow in our relationship with Jesus. Our Catholic Appeal supports:

- Liturgical ministries who enhance our Worship, offering training for 2,800 Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.
- 25 seminarians who are in formation for whom we offer prayers and guidance.
- 1000 young people who are invited to consider a vocation to the religious life or priesthood through FOCUS 11.
- Diocesan-wide celebrations such as the Blue Mass, Christ Mass and the Corpus Christi procession.
- Catholic radio through Buena Nueva FM and Catholic news through The Florida Catholic or El Clarin bringing the Good News to 140,000 listeners and readers.
- Celebrations of our multi-cultural ministries, allowing us to experience the Real Presence of the Lord in communion and solidarity with our brothers and sisters of other lands.

Every baptized Catholic is called to lead each other to holiness through a life in Christ. In Matthew's Gospel, we are reminded that our leadership is about right choices that bring life to ourselves and others, relying on wisdom and understanding of God who knows us

better than we know ourselves. Through Our Catholic Appeal, we bring right choices to others:

- We prepared and welcomed more than 600 new Catholics at Easter this past year.
- We served more than 24,000 children and youth in parish religious education programs. More than 14,000 students are educated in an atmosphere of faith through our 44 Catholic schools and freestanding preschools.
- Our trained catechists prepare 10,000 children, youth and adults for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation.
- 534 couples enter into the vocation of marriage through Family Life Office programs.
- We offer spiritual renewal and formation to more than 13,000 people each year through San Pedro Center.

Jesus invites us to rethink our relationships with others. As we are committed to sharing, we act with the same loving-kindness as God as acts toward us. This is made possible through the support offered by Our Catholic Appeal.

- We continue to bring hope to thousands of Haitian people through our Refugee Resettlement program of Catholic Charities of Central Florida when their homes & livelihood were destroyed by an earthquake.
- We share the Kingdom of God distributing more than 5 million pounds of food out of 6 centers of Catholic Charities of Central Florida.
- We provide compassionate care to the medically underserved.
- Seventy adults who are diagnosed with developmental or intellectual disabilities are offered an environment of dignity and respect at Bishop Grady Villas.
- Religious and elementary education programs proclaim a Gospel of hope to the people of the Dominican Republic.
- Almost 900 trained pastoral leaders offer comfort to the bereaved, bring life to the sick and provide theological formation for those who serve in their ministries.

Paul writes to the Corinthians, "What eyes has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him. This God has revealed to us through the Spirit."

Through the ministries supported by Our Catholic Appeal, we open eyes and ears by revealing God's love to the heart of His people. In this way, we prepare the kingdom of heaven on earth by choosing fullness of life, goodness and justice for all.

This year, may your gift for Our Catholic Appeal, for our people, our ministries, our future come from your heart and be based on love.