



(FAQ) Frequently-Asked Questions Regarding the Bishop's Appeal

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Can I make a gift on-line? Yes! Here is a link to our on-line giving page:

<http://www.portlanddiocese.net/onlinegiving>

Why does the Diocese do the Appeal? Your parish is the primary source of spiritual, educational, and social service. However, there are some services that are beyond the reach of any one parish; they are better provided on a regional or state-wide basis. The Appeal helps support them.

The other reason for the Appeal is that it gives Catholics the chance to look beyond the boundaries of their parish toward the larger needs of Maine people. We are a universal Church. We should not restrict our caring just to our parish. The Appeal

reminds us that everyone is our neighbor, not just the person in the next pew or down the block.

As Church, we are to share Good News and do Good Works for all the people. To do this, we need the hands of the whole Church in Maine to join in prayer and in service.

The Diocese of Portland, which includes the entire state of Maine, provides leadership, governance, and services for parishes and individuals. While the parish is the focus of our church life, parishes cannot do everything on their own. They look to the Diocese for service and support.

Like any institution, the Diocese requires funding to do its work. The Appeal makes up almost two-thirds of our operating income. Without those resources, we could do little.

How are the funds used? You will find a complete list of Appeal-supported services and programs on another page of this Web site.

When does the Appeal happen? The leadership phase of the Appeal begins in mid-April.

The general Appeal kicks off on the third weekend in May. Our aim is to complete the Appeal by the end of June. However, there is usually much follow-up to do well into the Fall.

Of course, we welcome gifts any time!

Do all Catholics contribute? The Church is a gift from God. All members of the Church are responsible for the Church. Part of that responsibility is to provide the resources of time, talent, and treasure the Church needs to carry out its mission.

We are grateful to the individuals and families who fulfill this responsibility. But 60,000 registered Catholic families do not participate.

Are there guidelines to help me decide how much to give? There is no one "correct" amount. The most important guideline is: what is God calling you to do? The answer will vary according to things like your economic status and your family obligations.

Before you decide how much to share through the Bishop's Appeal, please pray over three questions:

- ***How much is the Lord asking you to share in love and justice?***

Jesus gave us one guideline: "Share from your substance, not just your surplus." That is, don't let sharing be the last use of your treasure. Ask God what is right for you. There is no magic number — one size does not fit all.

- **What gift will fully reflect your thanks to God for all the gifts you have received?**

All we are and all we have are God's gifts to us. God cannot be outdone in generosity. Let your gift be a measure of your gratitude.

- **What is your share of responsibility for the mission of the Church?**

As members, we all are responsible (in proportion to our means) to provide the resources the Church needs to carry out its mission of bringing Christ to the world. When you share your gifts, you make our Church and our world more like what God wants them to be.

Your sharing is right when it makes you joyful about how you have responded to the Lord's call. We appreciate every gift.

If your gift has remained the same three years or more while your circumstances have improved, please consider a step up to a higher level of sharing. Needs do increase each year.

One guideline to consider is to give to the Appeal an amount equal to 25% of the amount you give to your parish. (This works only if you are giving to your parish in proportion to your means.)

Another general giving guideline to consider is to add up all that you and your family spend on entertainment and personal travel in a year. This includes money for vacations, movies, snowmobiles, golf, etc. Then give an equal amount to the church, with 75-80% going to your parish and 25-20% going to the Appeal.

As you consider this question, please think about your assets as well as your income. Many people have stocks, interest in real estate, etc.

What is the Bishop's Guild? The Bishop's Guild recognizes those individuals and families who contribute \$1,000 or more to the Appeal. Their leadership sets an example of generosity for everyone.

How long do I have to pay my pledge? While one-time gifts are always accepted, we urge Appeal participants to consider a pledge, to be paid in installments. For most people, a pledge spread over time allows them to make a larger contribution. We generally accept pledges paid over 10 months, beginning July 1. (We use 10 rather than 12 for two reasons: first, it's easier to divide by 10! Second, the Appeal Office is so busy conducting the new Appeal in May and June that there is no time for billing in those months.) We will accept pledges for five months or, in special cases, a different number of months.

Can I have my pledge payment automatically deducted from my checking account? Yes. There are two options on the Gift Form to do that. You can use your own on-line banking service to set up a monthly payment of your pledge. We

recommend this option because it has no cost to you or to the Appeal Office. The other option is Electronic Fund Transfer: with your permission we withdraw your payment each month from your checking account. There is a cost to the Appeal to do each transaction, however.

Can I use my credit card to make a gift? You certainly can! Our Gift Form has space to provide your credit card number and expiration date. We charge your card when we receive the Gift Form for the total amount of the gift; we are not equipped to make monthly charges. If you wish to spread payments out, you have that option with your card; you pay interest, of course. We suggest that anyone who wishes to spread payments out over more than three months should make a regular pledge, since we charge no interest.

If my financial circumstances change, am I required to pay my pledge? Do I commit a sin if I fail to pay? A pledge is not a legal commitment. Anyone may end a pledge at any time, simply by notifying the Appeal Office. There is never a question of sin involved.