



My name is Garry FitzGerald and I was fortunate enough to be asked by Kevin Lovejoy to give this year's Catholic Appeal witness talk. I have been a parishioner at St Patrick's for almost 25 years and Irish Catholic for 68 years which is exactly how old I am. I am a physician in Family Practice and Preventive Medicine and have commuted weekly for the past twenty years between our home on the Key Peninsula and Loma Linda University Medical Center in California and during my weekly travels my wife Cathleen has kept the home fires burning. And although Cathleen is not Catholic she has shared first hand many wonderful experiences with St. Patrick's and its exceptional people.

I was born and raised in a strong Irish Catholic family in Boston, Mass. where I learned at a very early age the importance of not only the faith-based commitments of being Catholic, like attending mass every Sunday and Holy Day, saying my prayers every day and not eating meat on Fridays, but I also learned the social commitments of being Catholic, helping with church functions, helping others and the importance of helping out financially.

When at age 6 I first started getting an allowance of 25c a week my Dad sat me down and told me that with an allowance not only came the ability to have fun but also the responsibility to help others. So we determined that each week a nickel of my allowance would go to our family's support of Catholic charities that helped others in need and that I would even have a say in which charities I wanted to help. I have a friend, Leland Kaiser, who is a consultant in the area of Health Care Spirituality. Leland says that when he's asked by a healthcare entity to

consult he doesn't look at their mission statement but rather their checkbook. Because where they spend their money truly tells him what their priorities are.

Well, when you look at where the dollars from the Annual Catholic Appeal go... it speaks volumes about the priorities and mission of the archdiocese to which we belong. 93% of the funds collected go to support over 60 ministries and services throughout Western Washington along with rebates to the Parishes within the Archdiocese.

The annual Catholic Appeal is really about being Catholic and part of a universal church that recognizes priests and deacons need to be trained, social services for the poor and needy need to be offered, Catholic schools like our own must be sustained and grown, retired priests and nuns who gave so much of their lives to Catholic service need to be supported and the list goes on and on. Just think how the training of our own Deacon Bill has benefitted this Parish especially in this time of change. I truly believe if the only thing we ever got out of our support of the Annual Catholic Appeal was Deacon Bill we would still have received much more than we have given.

I've seen firsthand some of the wonderful things that have been accomplished by programs supported by our Annual Catholic Appeal dollars. I have friends on the Key Peninsula who although in their late 60's took on the responsibility of raising a very mentally troubled adolescent who had already had several previous suicide attempts, and they really didn't know where to turn for help. Even though they are not Catholic someone referred them to Catholic Community Services and for the past six months CCS has helped this new extended family by sending a counselor weekly to their home to help establish a supportive environment of trust and understanding for this young man. Now this by no means has resolved all of his issues but for the first time in years he has started on a journey of healing and love. Each and every one of us through our gifts to the Annual Catholic Appeal have in a personal way helped this young man and who knows what wonderful things he will achieve with God's and our help.

Many of you probably remember Jack Enright who was a member of this parish for his entire remarkable 99 year life. Jack was baptized in St Pats, married here and had his funeral here several months ago. In his last year when Jack was struggling and wanted to remain at home

with his 98 year old wife and his caregiver daughter, it was CCS that provided homecare workers to assist his daughter Kitty so that he could stay in the loving environment of his own home to his final end. Again, it was each and every one of us through the ACA that gave a remarkable committed parishioner like Jack the ability to spend his final months in such a loving and caring environment.

St Augustine states: “ What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like.”

So in this Year of Mercy within our Catholic Church we all have a wonderful opportunity to show our love through our support of the ACA.

Martin Luther King once said “How often our lives are characterized by a high blood pressure of creeds and an anemia of deeds.” It’s time for each of us to put the creeds we as Catholics believe, into the action of our deeds. We all know how great it feels to lend a helping hand. I know personally, even when I was a kid, giving a nickel of my allowance to the church made me feel pretty good, probably better than if I spent it all on candy--in more ways than one. Today when I see what our church does for those in need and the educational system we have created with schools like St Pats and Bellarmine, and the missions we as a Catholic Church support it not only makes me feel good but proud to be Catholic.

This year’s total ACA goal is _____ and our Parish portion is _____. Now that seems like a goal that we should not only be able to achieve but even better exceed. Every dollar St Pat’s raises beyond our goal amount is rebated directly back to our Parish to be used for all the other wonderful things we need and do. If we each gave a dollar a day, half of what we probably pay for a Starbucks or a soda, not only would we exceed our goal but most likely improve our health. That’s the physician in me speaking.

The Seattle Archdiocese has made it extremely easy for each of us to donate to the ACA. We can use the envelopes sent to us, or the ones in the pews, to make a one time gift or a monthly pledge that can be charged to a credit or debit card, transferred electronically, or paid

by check. If it's more convenient you can even pledge and pay online. Also check and see if your employer has a matching gift program which will help get us to our goal and beyond even more quickly. And if your kids get an allowance or have a part time job, what a great time as a family to sit down and decide how much each member can contribute and maybe take a trip to one of the shelters in the area that their donation has helped to support. If the situation is such that right now a financial contribution is not possible please still fill out the card and consider making a prayer pledge, an offering to pray for the success of the ACA and all its projects throughout the year because we can never underestimate the power of prayer.

I, along with our Jesuit priests, Deacon Bill and all of the amazing staff of St Patricks thank all of you for your past generosity to the ACA and this Parish and we look forward to an even greater level of support in the year to come. St Patrick's is our home, Catholicism our faith, and love our guiding principle and the choice to make a difference in the world is truly ours.