

How To Ask For Money—An Opportunity to Give

Today the Diocese ran a workshop to help parish staff and volunteers prepare to campaign for the Annual Bishop's Appeal. We asked three questions to get a handle on what we are really doing when we promote ABA.

1. Why do people give? And also, why do stewards give?

Among other things, people give because they want to help those in need. But you don't need to be a Christian to be a philanthropist. So, why do Christian stewards give? The group agreed that Christian stewards don't so much give to needs as have a need to give. God has showered us with gifts and stewardship is our response to God's generous giving.

2. Why don't parishioners give?

The answers to this question are the obstacles we need to address. Here are some top excuses:

- Nobody asked them!
- A faulty or inadequate understanding of who is being served by their contribution
- An attitude of inadequacy, want, or poverty--often looks like greed or selfishness
- Discouraged that one person cannot make a difference
- Lack of trust in the distribution process

3. Why are you afraid to ask people to contribute?

- Fear of rejection
- Lack information or passion about the cause
- Haven't given yourself
- Embarrassed to ask, afraid of pushing people or imposing

So, take the pressure off!

If you are raising money for a cause such as the Annual Bishop's Appeal, you are **not** asking for money. You are **giving** people an opportunity to give.

Disciples need to give. Why does the church ask for money? Because she has to! That's what Christians do, they share what they have to help the needy. When the church asks for money, she is helping Christians to fulfill their responsibility of discipleship. Moreover, why do people come to church if not to grow spiritually? In Lent we are asked to increase our practices of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. Giving people an opportunity to support the Annual Bishop's Appeal for the needy helps them to grow spiritually. Don't stunt people's growth by failing to invite them to participate.

As for embarrassment, forget about it. Be proud to offer people an opportunity to be part of something great. Here are some tips:

1. Know your cause. Oftentimes people assume the Bishop's Appeal is for the Bishop and they wonder what they'll get out of it. The Annual Bishop's Appeal supports many

agencies that help the poor and needy by distributing funds through Catholic Charities. The appeal supports programmes that in turn maintain parish life and supports national and international causes to help those in need.

2. ABA makes it easy to help. And remember, the main reason people give is because they want to help. By giving to ABA, people know their giving supports ethical charities, there is only one solicitation, their single gift touches the lives of many through a diversity of causes, and it is faith-based.
3. Build relationships with the organisations that you help. Invite speakers from the organisations to testify to the difference contributions make in the lives of people. Follow up with the organisations throughout the year, make friends, build a relationship. It's not only about money, it's about love!
4. Participate in the opportunity to give. Whether you are lay or religious, rich or poor, everybody has something to give. Make a contribution that is meaningful to you before you ask others to participate.
5. Having made your gift, ask people to join you in supporting the poor, supporting parish life programming, and in building the Body of Christ together in the Diocese of Calgary.

Many of our parishes have great ideas for spreading the word about how ABA touches the lives and warms the hearts of people in S. Alberta. Please share your strategies in the comments section on this blog or by e-mailing the stewardship office at stewardship@rcdiocese-calgary.ab.ca.