

My Dear Friends of St. Lawrence,

It has been quite a long time since I last sent an email blast to all of you. Ever since the State of New Jersey allowed us to re-open our churches back in June, I knew that I would be seeing the overwhelming majority of you in church again, meaning that I could address all of you directly from the pulpit. It has really been so wonderful to see nearly all of you once again in person over the past several months. As I write this message, I really do hope and pray that all of you are safe, healthy and doing very well.

Last weekend, we began the 2021 Archbishop's Annual Appeal. Many of you probably remember that the last time we started this appeal in the winter of 2020, we were quickly shutdown due to Covid-19 and as a result, everything came to a sudden halt. Unfortunately, what did not come to a sudden halt was suffering humanity. We all know that the suffering of humankind became exponentially worse as a result of the Corona Virus. Sadly, the response to the 2020 annual appeal was very poor because we all found ourselves focusing on so many other important matters. Many of us were infected by this terrible virus which crippled and even killed many of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Moreover, so many people found themselves unemployed or underemployed and life itself became a struggle. We also know how many suffered mentally due to quarantine regulations and developed emotional and psychological problems and turned to substance abuse for help. The very fabric of our domestic situations and the status of our mental health were altered and in some cases, unraveled entirely. The very definition of 'suffering humanity' has a new meaning for us now, versus how things were pre-Covid.

For those of us who have survived and remained relatively unscathed, we are all acutely aware of the disturbing stories and footage we've read about and witnessed in the news. Too many of our friends in Jesus have lost their jobs, homes, families and sense of purpose. For this reason, Cardinal Tobin has asked every parish in the Archdiocese of Newark to prayerfully consider giving something substantial towards the 2021 appeal. Cardinal Tobin has assured us that 100% of what you give to the appeal will directly benefit those who are most in need - those who have been marginalized and disenfranchised, like the poor, the hungry, the homeless and those with mental health issues with nowhere to turn. Catholic Charities is one of the main components of this appeal and you have the option of designating precisely where you would like your donation to go. While Catholic Charities is one option, there are others such as providing financial aid to the seminary to help fund the education for future generations of Priests, as well as supporting various outreach ministries like evangelization, youth/campus ministries and hospital chaplaincy

programs (just to name a few). My personal favorite is Catholic Charities, which is why I mention it because the stories we have heard that pull at our heartstrings can have happier endings with our assistance. If you would like more in-depth information about this appeal, please go to rcan.org/sharing or to the official website of the Archdiocese of Newark at <http://www.rcan.org>

What is particularly unique about this year's appeal is that Cardinal Tobin expects each parish to reach 100% of its goal. For those parishes that fail to reach their goals, they will be required to make up the difference through other means by June 30th of this year. The goal for St. Lawrence is \$26,688. The reason for this unprecedented move is that the need for financial assistance has grown in leaps and bounds as a result of the pandemic and due to the tremendous shortfall from last year's appeal, there simply is not enough money to meet the challenge of providing for those who are truly in need. The Archdiocese therefore finds itself in dire straits and is relying on our generosity to minister adequately. Cardinal Tobin has promised us that this appeal has nothing whatsoever to do with paying employees or bills at the Archdiocesan Center in Newark. Rather, **every** single red cent will go towards what is outlined in the appeal (again, please visit the website for further information). In the past, many a parishioner has approached me personally saying that they would rather give money directly to St. Lawrence in lieu of giving to the Archbishop's Annual Appeal, however there are those out there who are far worse off than we could imagine and it's only right and honorable that we do right by those who are destitute. As much as St. Lawrence relies on the donations of its parishioners to meet payroll and pay its bills, there are those poor souls out there whom we do not see everyday, yet hurt in ways we cannot fathom. At the same time, St. Lawrence will actually benefit from meeting its goal because as stated above, we are required to meet our goal which means if we do not, we will have to dig into some of the accounts of St. Lawrence to make up the difference. If we do succeed in meeting our goal, the Archdiocese will send us a rebate check - rewarding us for taking care of Christ's poor. Therefore, if you do decide to make a donation, **PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE** indicate that you are a member of St. Lawrence Church so that our parish gets credit and it's that much less we need to give to the Archdiocese in the event that we fail to meet our goal. That is extremely important, so kindly remember to make sure that St. Lawrence is written or checked-off somewhere in your envelope or electronic gift.

Jesus Christ said in Matthew 25, "Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me." As we consider giving to this very noble cause, let us keep this quote from our Blessed Savior in mind. Many years ago, when Hurricane Sandy hit Weehawken, St. Lawrence Church was essentially left in

ruins. We are all aware that there was serious talk at the Archdiocese that St. Lawrence would be closed. Through the goodness and generosity of all of YOU, St. Lawrence remained open. When Cardinal Tobin became Archbishop of Newark in 2017, St. Lawrence Church was still connected to Saints Peter and Paul Church in Hoboken. Again, the Cardinal could have made it easy for everyone by permanently shutting the doors of our pretty little church, but thankfully decided not to, and to allow St. Lawrence to run independent of Hoboken and stand on its own two feet. As a result, St. Lawrence has flourished beautifully. My dear friends, let us show Cardinal Tobin that he made the right decision in keeping St. Lawrence Parish alive and give to this appeal in ways we've never done before. Envelopes are located throughout the church, but if you prefer to give online, that is fine as well. If you have any questions, you would do well to research this appeal at the electronic address listed above or even contact me directly. I am more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

On behalf of the poor people of the Archdiocese of Newark, I thank you for your consideration, support and generosity. I promise to keep you posted with future emails regarding the 2021 Archbishop Annual Appeal.

Sincerely in Christ,
Fr. Eric