

Pledges to Archbishop's Annual Appeal top \$8.4 million

At the first of four receptions thanking volunteers who worked on the 2009 Archbishop's Annual Appeal, everyone agreed: The appeal works.

Gathered at St. Joseph in Fullerton Nov. 5, volunteers, pastors, pastoral life directors and Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien praised the effort and the appeal's new format.

So far this year, Catholics have given a record \$8.416 million in gifts and pledges, compared to \$5.9 million last year. Some 42,000 people gave this year, up from 27,000 last year.

"When other dioceses took a beating, we went up 45 percent," Archbishop O'Brien said. "It's a great boost for the archdiocese."

Despite the appeal's name, the archbishop credited the pastors and pastoral life directors with the campaign's success.

"You are the ones who sparked this," he said. "It's the leadership in our parishes we're so grateful for, and that leadership wouldn't get far without those who are accompanying them tonight."

Receptions were also to be held at St. John the Evangelist Severna Park, St. Patrick in Cumberland and Mount St. Mary's Seminary and University in Emmitsburg.

Across the archdiocese, more than 525 parishioners participated in training sessions.

"They were incredible; they made sure the day-to-day things were done for the appeal," said Patrick Madden, executive director of development for the archdiocese.

The appeal's theme was "Do everything for the glory of God," and it resonated with parishioners.

Of the money collected, a minimum of 25 percent stays in the parish, while the rest supports Catholic schools, Catholic Charities, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Respect Life, and Hispanic, youth, African-American and prison ministries.

“There were a lot of needs out there – these were tough times,” Madden said. “Within our archdiocese, parishioners stepped forward – we asked, and they stepped up.”

Parishioners seemed to like the way in which they were asked: in the pews. Past campaigns depended heavily on direct mail solicitations, but this year the appeal included an in-pew component, as well as a taped message from the archbishop that was played at Masses.

“It was very effective,” said Garland Dodson, co-chair of the appeal for St. Michael the Archangel in Overlea. “I think it worked out better.”

Another popular feature was the option to make monthly payments on pledges.

Mary Middleton, the secretary for St. Ann in Baltimore, said the option to pay monthly “made me increase my giving. I looked at it and said, ‘I can do that.’ ”

Monsignor James P. Farmer, pastor of St. Ursula in Parkville, said giving there increased significantly.

“The archbishop’s tape was very clear, very understandable and short, and that’s what people like,” he said. “Our giving was way up this year in spite of the difficult economic times that we’ve faced.”

His parish’s response, its largest ever, enabled the parish to repave its parking lot, a much-needed repair.

“You must be very satisfied,” Archbishop O’Brien told the crowd. “I’m sure each parish has received a little boon from this. It’s a great inspiration for me when I come out and see what’s being done.”