

# PARISH COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

As an active parish chairperson, you play an important role in your parish's goal achievement and in the overall success of the Appeal. The increased contributions generated because of *your* efforts help to ensure the continuation of hundreds of ministries serving more than 680,000 Catholics and others in the greater community.

These strategies will help you to promote the Appeal and encourage contributions throughout the year. The CSA staff is at your service to answer questions and provide materials.

## **January 2010 – Planning Ahead**

- Ask to be a guest on the agendas of your parish council and stewardship committee. Give a short outline of the Appeal's goals and its impact on your parish.
- If you are not already a member, join your parish's stewardship committee. The CSA and your own parish stewardship efforts can supplement and enrich each other. The more often the stewardship message is proclaimed, the better the results for both parish stewardship and the CSA.
- Just prior to kick-off weekend, hang your CSA posters in prominent places in the parish.
- Become familiar with the gift processing instructions so you will know how to handle contributions that may come to your parish office, rather than directly to the CSA staff.

## **February 13–14 , 2010 - Kicking Off the Appeal**

- Make a brief pulpit announcement about the Appeal.
- Ensure that the parish bulletin contains announcements about the Appeal.
- Include an intercession regarding the success of the CSA in the Prayers of the Faithful.
- Play the Archbishop's audio message at all Masses. The tape should be preceded or followed by a few words about the importance of the Appeal from you, the presider or other testimonial speaker. This brief talk should emphasize the impact the CSA has and motivate those present to financially support the Appeal. Invite parishioners to visit the CSA website ([www.catholicappeal.org](http://www.catholicappeal.org)) to learn about the many ministries funded through the Appeal.

# Encouraging Giving

**February 13 - through May 2010**

While pulpit and bulletin announcements (first bullet below) are a must, selecting several of the other strategies will help build awareness for the CSA and encourage contributions.

- Pulpit and Bulletin Announcements: Arrange for multiple pulpit and bulletin announcements about the Appeal, and personalize them for your parish.
- Mini-Stories for Bulletins: Plan to insert the new mini-stories into your weekly bulletins. These stories demonstrate the Appeal's broad reach.
- Prayers of the Faithful: Include intercessions in the Prayers of the Faithful at Saturday and Sunday Masses.
- Parish Newsletter: The parish newsletter is a terrific place for mini-story placement as well as personal notes encouraging generosity from your parish. Direct parishioners to the Appeal's website (*www.catholicappeal.org*) to learn more about the Appeal and the many ministries funded.
- Communication with Staff: Communicate often with your parish secretary and/or business manager. They are often on the front line, fielding questions about the Appeal. Be sure they are knowledgeable about the CSA and feel supported in their work. Share copies of pertinent handouts from the Guidebook and become familiar with the information found on the CSA website at [www.catholicappeal.org](http://www.catholicappeal.org) so you can spontaneously answer questions.

The mini-stories and bulletin announcements are also available through St. George and Liturgical bulletin publishers.

# Following Up

June & July 2010

## June

Review progress toward goal reports with the pastor, parish director or administrator. If your parish has reached goal, congratulations! No need to read further!

If your parish has not reached goal, the parish follow-up mailing will help! Now is the time to contact your pastor and parish staff to help them plan for and organize the parish follow-up letter process.

## July 5-July 31

Send a parish follow-up letter during the month of July. This is an extremely important and critical strategy for parishes that have not yet reached goal. The mailing process is as streamlined as possible. CSA staff supplies suggested letter copy, non-donor address labels (so no sorting is necessary), pledge cards and return envelopes. Parishes are responsible for the associated postal costs. As the third CSA mailing drops on **September 13**, *the follow-up mailing must be sent no later than July 31*.

The parish's personal stationery and mailing envelopes are used. The salutation on the letter reads, "Dear Friends," so the letter is simply reproduced on parish stationery. Or, should you prefer personalized salutations, contact the CSA Office to receive an e-mailed data file containing the salutation field. The letter can be signed by the pastor, parish director or administrator and/or the parish chairperson. It is helpful to recruit volunteers to assist with stuffing and mailing.

## Rationale for Timing of Parish Follow-Up Letter

As usual, this year's Appeal features two mailings in the first half of the year — one sent **February 8** and the other mailed on **April 12**. The third Appeal mailing is scheduled at a later date, **September 13**. This third mailing, rather than being mailed in May and on the heels of the first two letters, is positioned to generate contributions at a more favorable time of year.

A parish follow-up mailing in July allows adequate time for CSA staff to process gifts from the two spring mailings and generate a solid non-donor list for parish mailings. Conducting the follow-up mailing in July allows the parish ample time to execute the mailing, and the Appeal benefits from ongoing solicitation activity during summer months. A July follow-up mailing also allows the month of August for gift processing prior to the **September 13** archdiocesan mailing.

**The good news is that if (by July 1) your parish has already reached its goal, there is no need to do the follow-up mailing!** This means your parish is now minus one sizeable task, an added incentive to actively promote the Appeal in the early months. However, even if your parish has reached its goal, it is encouraged that you continue to provide opportunities for your parishioners to give to the CSA throughout the course of the campaign.

Pastors, parish directors, administrators and parish chairs will have access to periodic revenue reports to stay in touch with progress toward goal. Remember, be sure to enclose a pledge card and reply envelope so each parishioner will have a response mechanism. If you have taken the time to write an inspiring and motivational letter, you want to be sure people can respond while they are motivated and your message is fresh in their mind.

# Wrapping It Up

## September 1 – December 2010

If you completed the parish follow-up mailing between July 5–July 31, congratulations and thank you! You deserve to relax for a while and let people respond to your letter.

*The week of August 23 (approximately four to six weeks after your parish mailing), review your most recent progress report. If your parish has not reached goal within this timeframe, don't lose heart! There are some very effective and fun strategies available to you that can be implemented during the remainder of the year. You can plan them according to your own timeframe, in conjunction with your pastor/parish director/administrator.*

### Phone Calls

The months of September through December are an excellent time to make contact with those who have not yet given to the CSA. Phone calls can produce a noticeable increase in your parish's overall achievement. They are opportunities for enjoyable and fruitful conversation.

Phone contact is a critical element of raising funds for the CSA. Some contributors respond to mail, but many others respond better to personal contact. CSA staff and volunteers place phone calls to lapsed Campanile Society members - those who have contributed \$1,000 or more to the Appeal in the past, but have not yet contributed in the current year. While Campanile Society membership totals 1,300, the overall donor count for the 2009 Appeal was approximately 42,000 out of more than 230,000 households in our archdiocese. As you can see, there are many people who have either allowed their support to lapse or do not yet contribute to the CSA.

Strategic telefundraising may be conducted during the summer months utilizing RuffaloCody, a national fundraising firm, that works with a number of dioceses across the country. Calling donors who've not renewed their CSA support can be an effective option beyond simply mailing them. The CSA Office closely supervises this process.

## **STRATEGY #1: Phone Calls from the CSA Parish Chairperson**

Telephone follow-up is the most effective method of reaching parishioners who have not responded to the Appeal. This method offers the opportunity for personal contact. It provides nearly all the advantages of face-to-face communication, and the response rate is usually very high. It is also an excellent way to keep in contact with parishioners. Since most phone calls are local, this is a cost-effective way to follow up.

As a parish chairperson, you are in a unique and most appropriate position to call your fellow parishioners. You already have a link with them – you belong to the same parish. Your personal witness about the importance of the Appeal can help parishioners understand how their parish relates to the larger Catholic community.

A phone calling script follows Strategy #4 in this section. CSA staff can provide a manageable phone calling list, pledge cards, reply envelopes, etc.

## **STRATEGY #2: Phone-a-Thon Evening**

One way to get a lot done in a short timeframe is to make an “occasion” out of calling. Inviting several friends to join you at your home, your parish, school, library, or a place of business (with several phones in close proximity) can be an enjoyable way of securing gifts for the CSA. One parish asked volunteers to donate the use of their cell phones for the phone-a-thon. A script can be written for your callers. Callers can record information from the phone call on a pledge card. The completed pledge cards, indicating full name and address of the donor, donor ID, parish name, and amount of pledge can be returned to the CSA Office.

If you would like to involve youth representatives, consider Confirmation students or a group of Catholic high school students who need service hours. A script introducing them as youths committed to support for Catholic ministries and programs would be important. If you select this contact strategy, obtain the name of the Youth Minister or names of Confirmation facilitators from your parish office. Or, contact one of our Catholic high schools to explore this project.

Prior to any phone calling session, it would be helpful for the caller(s) to review the *Testimonial and Frequently Asked Questions* tabs on this website. Reproduction of pages is encouraged.

## **Selected Group Contacts**

### **STRATEGY #3: Small Group Social**

Send simple invitations to a group of your parishioners who have not yet contributed, inviting them to your home or perhaps to a nice meeting room at your parish. This gathering could be as short as forty-five minutes, or longer if you prefer more time to socialize. This contact strategy provides a social setting for you to explain your role as parish chairperson, and why you are encouraging them to contribute. Light snacks, refreshments, and name tags would enhance your social and help guests enjoy each other's company.

Pledge cards and envelopes can be distributed at the event, or mailed to guests immediately following the social with a personal note from you, thanking them for attending.

### **STRATEGY #4: Personal Notes**

If you are more comfortable writing to non-contributing parishioners, perhaps you would like to send a letter on your stationery, explaining your role and your reasons for supporting the Appeal. A pledge card and return envelope can be included. We suggest that you select a specific and manageable group to contact. Specific groups could be (1) your most generous contributors from the prior year who have not yet contributed, or (2) those who have never donated. If you want to strongly encourage increased participation, work from a manageable list of people who have never given to the Appeal. The CSA staff can provide information tailored to your intent. A follow-up phone call to ask if your letter arrived and if there are any questions would boost your response rate.

# Telephone Follow-Up

## Telephone Script

Hello, may I speak with Mr./Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_?

Hello, (Mr./Mrs./or First name), this is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling in regard to the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's Catholic Stewardship Appeal. Do you have a few minutes?

I am the parish chair for this year's Appeal and my goal is to encourage contributions from as many parishioners as possible. The Appeal supports critical ministries and programs that are important to individuals, families, and parish life. Over 680,000 Catholics within our Archdiocese are served by the Appeal.

### **Previous Donor**

Last year you gave a very generous gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Appeal. Would you be able to increase your contribution or match what you gave last year?

### **Non-Donor**

I noticed you have not responded to the Appeal this year, and we are hoping we can count on your support. Your gift can help us reach our parish goal, and we need more contributors in order to be successful. Can we count on your support?

### **If Gift Is Secured**

Thank you for your generosity. I will record your pledge on a card and forward it to the Catholic Stewardship Appeal office. They will send you a pledge reminder and reply envelope for your convenience. Thank you again for your time and for supporting the Appeal. It was nice visiting with you.

### **Unable to Give**

I am sorry you are not able to give at this time. Your prayers for the success of the Appeal would be much appreciated. Thank you for your time and it was nice visiting with you.