



>> Bishop Hurley receives the offertory gifts from Catholic school students and is assisted by Deacon Stanley Lechtanski (left) during the Catholic Schools Week Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Andrew, Feb. 1.

My dear friends,

On Ash Wednesday, March 9, we distribute ashes and mark the beginning of Lent. It is a privileged time and an opportunity for great blessings. In the morning on Ash Wednesday, I will bless and distribute the ashes and celebrate Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Andrew. At noon, I will repeat the celebration at West Catholic High School for the students. As a youngster, I was not particularly excited about the coming of Lent as it meant to me a time of deprivation of many things I enjoyed. Time, however, has changed my perspective and for me Lent has become, not a time of deprivation, but a time of opportunity to deepen my relationship with God and look within myself using prayer, fasting and penance to reconnect with the deepest roots of our faith. I hope it can be that for you.

Lent is the time for the special preparation of adult candidates for baptism through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). We also use this time as an opportunity to welcome and prepare others who are being received into full communion in the church. After a period of preparation, the candidates come to the Cathedral of Saint Andrew from

our parishes for what is known as the Rite of Election. Because of the large number of candidates (500-600) with their sponsors and families, we have three separate ceremonies beginning the First Sunday of Lent. It is always a great privilege for me to celebrate the Rite of Election. It is a celebration of not only the candidates' response to the call of the Lord but also that the

church has chosen (elected) them for membership. It also serves as a reminder that the church is larger and more diverse than our own parish and our own diocese can ever be. I would hope that as you see the candidates in your parish being dismissed for preparation after the homily that you would keep them in your prayers.

Catholic Services Appeal (CSA):

This year, with the late celebration of Easter, the recommendation of the council of priests (Presbyteral Council), is that pastors and parishes of the diocese be given the choice of having their CSA campaigns during the usual time after Easter or during the Lenten season. At this time, it appears that most parishes will do so during the Lenten season. As you know, parishes are not islands or congregational churches but are part of a larger church for which all have responsibility. In many dioceses, there is a fixed "tax" which the parish must pay from its regular Sunday income and, in addition, a diocesan appeal such as the CSA. In Grand Rapids, we have only the CSA. Each parish target is calculated on the basis of offertory income using the same percentage. School tuition and other parish income are not included in the calculation. It is for that reason that if a parish does not meet its obligations through the CSA, the parish is expected to meet its responsibility from regular income. I am deeply moved by the generosity of the people of the diocese to the CSA. All registered parishioners will be receiving information on the CSA depending on when the pastor/parish has chosen to do it. A video about the CSA has been made available to parishes for their use and is posted on our diocesan Web site: dioceseofgrandrapids.org

Televised Mass:

For over 50 years, Sunday Mass has been broadcast live from the Cathedral of Saint Andrew. The televised broadcast can be viewed on WXMI FOX 17 at 10 a.m. each Sunday. The broadcast area, for the most part, covers the entire diocese as well as areas of other nearby dioceses. I continue to hear from many

people, especially those confined to their homes through illness, age and other reasons, what a blessing the TV Mass is.

Beginning this month the televised Sunday Mass will be available during the week as a download on our diocesan Web site: dioceseofgrandrapids.org. I am most grateful to those who help make this service available to the people of West Michigan. Contributions to support the TV Mass are always welcome. Years ago, the Masses were provided as a public service by television stations but now we must purchase the televised time. Mass on television is not a substitute for participation in Sunday Mass, but it is a special blessing for those who are unable to leave their homes. For us, as a diocese, it is part of our outreach and evangelization efforts.

In these days, the use of the media and technology have become more a part of our lives than many of us could have imagined. It is a great blessing but has brought about great opportunities and challenges for us. The days of relying solely on TV and the printed word are long gone. Our sophisticated smart phones and technology, such as the Apple iPad and other similar products that come out each day, have changed the way we communicate,

the way we learn and the way we do business. Along with the many benefits of new technology there are also downsides. For us in the church, we need to embrace that technology if we are to reach a generation who have and will grow up with it.

Technology has changed the way we deal with each other and not all of it is good. On page 7 of this issue of FAITH magazine, we have reprinted an article written by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, D.C. It is entitled "Christian Discourse: Speaking the Truth in Love". It is worthy of our reflection in terms of our use of the media and the way we often deal with each other, whether in the church or society. I am grateful to Cardinal Wuerl for his observations and for permission to reprint the article in our diocesan publication.

Governance Study update:

With the leadership of our new Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Mr. David Faber and our Diocesan School Board, we have begun a study of governance within our Catholic schools office and within each of the Catholic schools in our diocese. The goals of this study are:

1. Explore current and possible diocesan governance models and identify a governance structure that will best serve the current and future needs of all 31 Catholic schools.
2. Explore current and possible school governance models and identify those that will be supported within the diocese.
3. Determine appropriate relationships between diocesan governance and individual schools' governance.

On Feb. 16, Mr. Richard Burke of Catholic School Management, conducted a seminar on ownership and governance in contemporary Catholic schools for 80 pastors, principals and board members from approximately 44 parishes. The Catholic schools office has scheduled follow-up listening sessions to be held on March 1 and 2 with all pastors, principals and boards. Catholic School Management will document our explorations, identify relevant possibilities and assist in making final recommendations that will:

1. Define and diagram the diocesan governance structure as well as each unique school governance structure and how they relate to one another.
2. Provide recommended by-laws to govern these entities.

The governance structures that currently exist in many of our schools are effective and provide the appropriate level of support to their associated schools; however, the collaborations necessary for the future sustainability and vitality of our schools require us to consider, "Are these models the most effective for bringing about the collaborative relationships our schools will need to strategically plan for the future?"

As we prepare to celebrate the season of Lent and look forward to Easter, may God's special blessings be with all of you.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,
Bishop Walter A. Hurlley



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