

From the desk of

MONSIGNOR ZENZ



September 10, 2020

My brothers and sisters in the Lord,

In this my weekly message to you, I want to speak first of all about our participation in the Catholic Services Appeal. Having done that, I will then offer some reflections on this weekend's beautiful Gospel about the importance of forgiveness.

As you know, for the last 38 years, the Central Service Operation of the Archdiocese has been funded through the Catholic Services Appeal. Through this appeal each parish of the Archdiocese supports the common good of all parishes. We have a target assigned according to our parish resources and we are expected to make our target. This year it is \$185,000. Our target for 2020 has been reduced by approximately 15% because of the pandemic and the economic impact caused by the Corona Virus. Despite the pandemic, the work of the Church goes on and in many ways is more vital and necessary than ever. The Archdiocese depends on contributions from the parishes to continue the work of the Archbishop and his staff, the ministry of Sacred Heart Major Seminary and many programs of evangelization, service of the poor and communication within the Archdiocese. The programs that I just mentioned are especially critical at this time. As we all know, a lot of things are happening "virtually" and the Archdiocese has tried to fill the void by providing livestreamed Masses and other resources for evangelization and continued growth in the faith on the internet. The CSA also assists coordinating faith formation for youth and adults, monitoring our Catholic schools and preparing couples for marriage.

The work of the Church is spiritual but it still needs financial assistance as well as many volunteers and the generous souls who offer their pain and prayers as a sacrifice of love. I realize that many have been gravely affected by the virus and probably do not have the resources that they would have ordinarily been able to call upon. On the other hand, perhaps some of us are doing well and could "fill the void" for those who are not able to make a contribution at this time. Whatever you can do would be greatly appreciated. If our parish does not reach its target we will still be expected to fulfill it (thus drawing from our savings on deposit with the Archdiocese).

The theme for CSA 2020 is "Rise and Be Not Afraid." These are words that come from Matthew 17 as Jesus comes toward the disciples right after they saw His transfigured glory. The text says that He placed His hands on their heads and told them "Rise and be not afraid." They had received a mysterious vision which had overwhelmed them and made them afraid. Now Christ was trying to calm their fears and prepare them to descend down the mountain, back to ordinary demands and needs. The same is true for us every day. God gives us blessings and touches us personally and then we are to use these gifts for others. These gifts let us show our gratitude for blessings received. I myself will be contributing to the CSA and I hope you will do what you can, even if it is a relatively small amount.

This weekend we hear the well-known parable of the servant who was forgiven a great deal but was unwilling to forgive a fellow servant a small amount. The point of the parable should be obvious enough: God has forgiven each of us enormously and consistently over the years but we are not always as generous

with others as the Lord has been with us. If we really meditated on the full depth of God's mercy and compassion, we would be eager and enthusiastic about wanting to forgive!

A second point implicit in the parable is this: ultimately, forgiveness does not generate from us. God is the source of all mercy and compassion. We know how to forgive because we have first *been* forgiven. God has forgiven us and continues to do so every day of our lives. We *depend* on His forgiveness! Conscious of His forgiveness, we not only accept it but allow it to flow through us to others. As we receive, so must we give. That is a beautiful theme and message for all of us. God's mercy is a gift and the more that we treasure it, the more we will be aware of how to share this great blessing with others. The better we are at receiving, the more natural we will be at giving. Let us consider these thoughts and especially think about people who have been models of forgiveness and compassion for us and pray for people who truly deserve our forgiveness.

Your brother in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mr. John P. Zeng". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.