

To the St. Francis Parish Community:

The annual Diocesan Services Appeal (DSA) is around the corner and we hope we can count on your family's support for this year. No one likes ongoing fundraising so this year our parish will be targeting the season of Lent to launch, EXECUTE, and complete DSA-2020. Mary Jane Tramontin, Mike Fontana, John Dunlap and I have formed a committee to help Fr James carry out a successful appeal.

The diocesan theme this year is from Proverbs 16:20, "Happy the one who trusts the Lord." There are many people within our diocese that rely on financial support from DSA and they trust that we will be as responsive as we possibly can. And, ideally, we are happy to share our financial resources. The Bishop's goal for the diocese is \$5.2 million and our parish goal is about 4% of this goal or \$211,028. The target for each parish is not arbitrarily set and is established by a standard formula. Based on several factors, our parish goal this year is about 3% lower than our goal was last year.

In 2014-2016, St Francis was 96-97% successful at hitting its parish DSA target. In 2017, when the diocese kicked off the five-year Witness to Hope capital campaign, the diocese did not hold a separate DSA campaign that year. Our total obligation to the diocese was \$1.7 million: \$1.5 million was for Witness to Hope and \$200,000 was for DSA-2017. In my brief time at St Francis, I heard a few people mention that they thought the five-year Witness to Hope campaign would replace the DSA campaign for five years. Based on my experience elsewhere in the diocese, I knew that this was not the case and I regret that some people got the wrong information. Other than 2017, the DSA is an annual campaign to support diocesan-wide programming and I hope we can count on you to participate in DSA-2020.

Over the years, DSA has been pitched to me as a way that several individual parishes can band together to make an impact in ways that no one parish could. This explanation always seemed to resonate the best with me and elevated the importance of my financial support. Here are a few tangible examples in several categories for you to consider when making your decision to support DSA this year.

DSA funding is used for programs that enrich our lives:

- Campus Ministry for Catholic students at our colleges and universities
- St Francis Retreat Center for those of us that designate a day or weekend away from our everyday life for prayer and reflection
- Hispanic Ministry for those that live in our communities as well as for those that work on our farms and orchards
- Programs for Marriage, Family and Youth to assist, encourage, and promote our closest personal relationships
- Faith Magazine which is provided to our homes each month "for free"
- Diocesan Assemblies like "Made for Happiness" as well as the diocesan men's and women's conferences

DSA funding is used for programs that provide for the needy and vulnerable in our communities:

- Washtenaw County Catholic Charities
- Faith-based counseling services
- Hospital and Jail Ministry
- Supporting the various Catholic parishes and organizations in the City of Flint

- To provide tuition assistance and grants for those attending our 32 Catholic primary and secondary schools

DSA funding is used for programs that subsidize education and formation of people responding to a call to serve us in ordained and lay ministry:

- Seminarian education for those entering the priesthood
- Diaconate formation for those becoming deacons
- Catechist formation for our paid and volunteer religious education staff

DSA funding is also used to support diocesan operations. 30% of the diocese budget is supported from DSA (not 30% of DSA goes to support diocesan operations!) and I think it is important to be clear how this indirectly benefits us at St Francis. In my role as your business manager, I rely heavily on the diocesan support in several critical areas:

- Accounting and Finance support
- Human Resource, Property Insurance and Employee Benefit management
- Building Approval and Construction Financing

For those of you who are familiar with small business administration and management, I hope you can recognize some of the benefits of shared “corporate” services and you can imagine how much it would cost if we had to hire additional staff members with this level of expertise or pay for billable hours for services we use.

The DSA campaign will kick off in a couple of weeks with a letter from the bishop and a video from him that will be shown before the weekend Masses. We are working to line up speakers at a few of the Masses to provide a brief but personal testimonial of how DSA has supported their work and ministry. We will also be giving updates throughout the campaign so you can see how well we are doing at meeting our goal. In the past, the average contribution from St Francis to DSA was \$350-400 per family. Some contributed more and some less but overall this is an excellent average! Our participation rate was about 10% or approximately 300 families. The diocesan average is 25-30% so if we can merely double the number of contributing families meeting our financial goal should be easily achieved.

I hope this Lent, your family will join me in prayerfully considering a donation to DSA.

Thank you,

Robert Kehn
Parish Business Manager