

The Lenten Appeal
helping others through our sacrifices
By Bishop Victor Galeone

Dear Friends in the Lord,
Lent is the season when the Church invites us to join Our Lord more intimately in a spirit of penance. This penance is traditionally takes one of three forms: as it relates to oneself (fasting), to God (prayer), or to others (almsgiving). In this month's message I'd like to focus our attention on almsgiving, that is, helping others through our sacrifices.

You may recall that since becoming bishop of Saint Augustine, I've had to ask for your help to support our seminarians studying for the priesthood and for the long-term care of some of our priests. This appeal was conducted through the postal service in the springtime of every year - except for last year. Last year's financial status of these funds was so positive that no appeal was necessary.

This year, however, the situation is different. On page 31 you will find our annual financial report for fiscal year July '04 to June '05. I invite you to study it carefully. You will notice a sizable deficit, caused mostly by the shortfall generated by the hurricanes that battered our state. In her introductory to the annual report, our finance director, Cathy Macina has explained why our diocese, even though we suffered little damage from the hurricanes, incurred the liability that caused most of our deficit.

Accordingly, I would like to invite everyone to give serious thought to support our Lenten Appeal. In doing so, you will be helping to defray the costs involved in the formation of our future priests as well as long-term care of our priests. I am well aware that some of you are already sharing your abundance during Lent with those in need, for example through Operation Rice Bowl . I ask you to support this appeal as well, if possible. For those who are not in the habit of giving alms during Lent, this appeal is an ideal way to join your sacrifices with what Jesus suffered for us on the cross.

As St. Paul wrote to the Colossians (1:24): "I rejoice in what I am suffering for you; for I make up in my own body what Christ still has to suffer for the sake of his body, the Church."

Inserted between pages eight and nine, you will find an envelope with a scale of suggested contributions, prorated according to one's income. The suggestions are just that - suggestions. Some of you may be able to give more, others less, and still others can contribute prayers alone. However, if you do intend to help with the appeal, please detach the envelope now and place it near your checkbook. Then after some reflection and consultation with your spouse, if such is the case, decide on your contribution and mail it in the envelope.

Finally, I wish to remind everyone that the Lord is never outdone in generosity. Thank you for joining the Lenten Appeal this year! You are all in my prayers.