

# CATHOLIC HERALD

## Catholic Stewardship Appeal Special Edition

### Seminary in Midst of Historic, Explosive Growth

LARRY HANSON  
CATHOLIC HERALD STAFF

The Holy Spirit is having a significant impact on vocations in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

The archdiocese has 45 men studying for the priesthood, and there are 80 total seminarians from seven dioceses studying at Saint Francis de Sales Seminary.

“We are bursting at the seams,” said Fr. Luke Strand, who became the seminary’s rector in June. “We had men living in offices last year because we didn’t have enough places for them to go. When they renovated this building in 1989, they renovated it to accommodate 34 seminarians.”

The support of the Catholic Stewardship Appeal is a gift that will bear fruit even decades down the line.

“The real benefit of Saint Francis de Sales Seminary right now is that we are training priests, not just for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, but for the entire state and beyond, and the investment the CSA makes in its Milwaukee seminarians who will be pastors in our parishes here in Milwaukee is significant,” Fr.



▲ More than 2,000 people attended Saint Francis de Sales Seminary’s annual dinner in October. (Photo courtesy of Saint Francis de Sales Seminary)

Strand said. “We would not be able to train our Milwaukee men without the CSA’s investment in their future priests. Someone who’s making a gift to CSA has a desire for all of the ministries of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee to grow and (a desire) that the impact of the Gospel might be known here.”

To accommodate that exponential growth, a renovation project was completed last year that added 27 rooms to Meyer Hall.

The seminary can now accommodate up to 85 prospective priests, but that might not even be enough in a few years. There are proposed changes to the formation process that could add time to the beginning and end of the education period.

In addition to possibly having to add new rooms, structural changes will need to be made to the building and grounds. Amongst those possible repairs are the

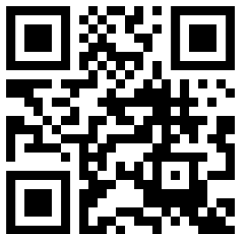
roof, HVAC systems, the air conditioning and the building’s iconic dome.

“From a bricks and mortar standpoint, we are going to need to make a significant investment in this mid-1800s campus to make sure that our buildings are viable,” Fr. Strand said. “In the midst of that, we are not going to lapse in the formation we are offering our men.”

The growth in vocations — especially aspiring priests — has been staggering since Fr. Strand joined the vocation office for the archdiocese in 2012. At that time, there were 17 seminarians for the archdiocese.

“Through this whole unified vocational approach, we’ve seen, as the archbishop says over and over, a real culture of vocations being created here in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee,” Fr. Strand said. “I think that’s one of the reasons why, over the past 10 years, we’ve seen a lot of men enter the seminary. It’s all the work of the Lord. Being in the vocation office for 10 years, one realizes that it does not depend on us. We work as though it does and then if any fruit

► **READ MORE PAGE 4**



Please provide faith and hope to so many with a gift to the Catholic Stewardship Appeal. Learn more at [www.catholicappeal.org](http://www.catholicappeal.org) or scan the QR code. Donation envelope enclosed.

# There Are Many Reasons to Support the Appeal

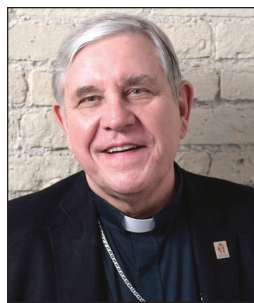
Dear Friends,

Through the Catholic Stewardship Appeal, we support thousands of people in our Archdiocese. Why do we do it? Because they need our help, and they are part of our family!

In this special edition of the Catholic Herald, we highlight many ways that the Catholic Stewardship Appeal is making a difference in the 10 counties of our Archdiocese. I encourage you to read more about all that is happening here.

Right now, your support of the Catholic Stewardship Appeal:

- Offers a helping hand to more than 50,000 people, the most vulnerable among us, through quality social



services from Catholic Charities;

- Provides for the recent ordination of five new priests and the education of 80 seminarians, a record number, studying at Saint Francis de Sales Seminary;

- Enables our 101 Catholic schools and our parish religious education programs to guide young people in faith;
- Prepares 24 deacon candidates so they can work in our parishes and help our families; and

- Strengthens many other important ministries of the Church.

You can make a difference in someone's life by making a gift that will lift them up, give them hope and let them know that God loves them. It will let them know that you love them, too!

Our giving not only allows us to help others but gives us the opportunity to become closer to God. When you invest in what matters to God, you strengthen your relationship with Him. I know I am happier and more at peace the more I am aware of God's presence in my life. It is in this way that we "light this world to heaven," as our theme for this year's CSA asserts.

I need your help. Your support today will give people the gift of support, education, faith, and counsel. I invite you to please prayerfully consider a gift to the CSA this year. **Every gift is needed. Every prayer is appreciated. Please help if you can.**

God Bless!

*+ Jerome E. Listecki*

Most Reverend Jerome E. Listecki  
Archbishop of Milwaukee

P.S. Please use the enclosed envelope to make your gift to the CSA. Or you can visit [www.catholicappeal.org](http://www.catholicappeal.org) to donate online.

Dear Friends,

When Archbishop Listecki asked us to chair the Catholic Stewardship Appeal, it was easy for us to say yes. Here's why:

- We have lived in the Archdiocese for more than 40 years, were married here and raised all our children here.

- We have consistently supported the Catholic Stewardship Appeal because we know the good work that it accomplishes in the Archdiocese.

- All the money stays local. One hundred percent of our donation



growth at the seminary and how it is supported by the Appeal.

- Our children are taught the faith

stays in the 10 counties served by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

- Saint Francis de Sales Seminary. Importantly, we are aware of the

through parish religious education programs and Catholic schools. More than 55,000 students were enrolled in these programs last year alone. That's amazing!

What we like most about the Appeal is that we do this work together as a community, as a family. We help our neighbors and friends, and the friends we haven't met yet. We think that is what God is calling us to do. As He says, "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will

be demanded of the person entrusted with more." (Luke 12:48).

Please join us and all the others in the Archdiocese in supporting the Appeal and keeping our Catholic home in southeastern Wisconsin strong and vibrant.

Blessings,

*Norma and John Herbers*

Norma and John Herbers  
Chairs, 2023 Catholic Stewardship Appeal

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# CSA Supports Religious Education Throughout Archdiocese

COLLEEN JURKIEWICZ  
CATHOLIC HERALD STAFF

Pope Francis once famously likened the Church to a “field hospital,” tending to the sick and wounded souls of mankind. If that is true, it could also be said that those serving in catechetical ministries must function as nurses, doctors and medics — highly trained practitioners engaging in care at the front lines.

Maintaining standards of excellence in catechesis, ensuring that ministers to youth and adults alike have the resources they need to function as so many little field hospitals throughout southeastern Wisconsin, that’s the job of the Office for Evangelization and Catechesis, and it’s a job they could not do without funding from the Catholic Stewardship Appeal.

“It’s really important that people in parishes of all different sizes and locations in the diocese have access to these resources — that it’s not just a select few parishes who are well-resourced,” said Gary Pokorny, director of evangelization and catechesis – childhood for the archdiocese.

Most parishes don’t have enough people on staff serving in religious education ministry. That’s where the staff at the Office for Evangelization and Catechesis comes in, helping to fill some of the gaps.

“People don’t realize how many lives we touch in catechetical ministry, and that often we are one or two people at each parish,” said Maureen Rotramel, director of faith formation and pastoral care at St. John XXIII Parish in Port Washington. “We have to wear a lot of hats. We need the support of the archdiocesan central offices. We’re the boots on the ground, working with families on a regular basis, working with young people, preparing people for sacraments.”

The Office for Evangelization and Catechesis provides training, continuing education, networking opportunities, consultations, financial support and more to parishes throughout the archdiocese.

“People who are supporting us through the CSA are helping us reach a variety of parishes — city parishes, rural parishes, multicultural parishes,” Pokorny said. “We serve in 10 counties. We serve parishes that are in clusters, multi-parish communities, parishes that have a lot of kids and families, parishes that don’t. We serve parishes that are a mix of ethnic and racial groups,



▲ Religious education programs, such as learning about the sacraments, are among money programs funded by the Catholic Stewardship Appeal. (Catholic Herald file photo)

parishes that are predominantly Hispanic, parishes that are largely English-speaking. We try to make ourselves available and helpful to parishes in each of those situations.”

In addition to the annual Catechetical Conference each summer, the Office for Evangelization and Catechesis offers regular professional development opportunities where catechists, directors of religious education and other parish staff members and volunteers can be exposed to new ideas and innovative models of instruction.

It was at one such gathering that Mary Jo Hennemann, director of religious education at St. James in Franklin, was first exposed to the idea of a “family model” for catechesis, where parents and children grades K through 12 receive formation alongside one another. Her parish made the decision to switch to the family model for the 2021-22 school year, and she described the support of Dr. Kathie Amidei, who works as a consultant for the Office for Evangelization and Catechesis, as invaluable.

“She even came to our parish to look at the physical space,” said Hennemann.

New catechetical leaders also receive vital support and training through the office’s Essentials for Catechetical Ministry program, which meets monthly. Christien Immel, co-director of Christian formation at the Sheboygan South Catholic Parishes, said the program has provided her with “the information, support and materials I need for a successful ministry.”

“I now have a binder full of information for reference at my fingertips, a better understanding of the resources available to me, and a network of other talented and experienced catechetical leaders that I can consult with when the need arises,” said Immel.

“In ministry, it is vital that we meet the people who come through our doors wherever they are on their faith journeys,” said Hennemann. “Meeting these people where they are at can promote questions about how best to help them — whether it’s a safe environment question, a curriculum question, a canonical question, a liturgical celebration question. It’s nice to have people who are ready and willing to help answer your questions and offer guidance, ensuring that what we do is in line with Church teaching, Canon Law and archdiocesan guidelines, while still being pastoral to the people who come through our doors.”

## ► SEMINARY, FROM PAGE 1

is borne, we know it's the work of the Holy Spirit, it's the work of God. I think that's what every priest does with his life — he gives himself fully in service of the Lord Jesus and the Church, and then if anything good happens, it's solely because of what God has done."

That ethos of laying the groundwork and then putting the seeds in God's hands has led to Milwaukee becoming one of the fastest-growing dioceses in the nation for vocations.

Fr. John LoCoco, the vocation director for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, can see the Lord's handiwork in the phenomenal success the archdiocese has seen.

"It is the Lord who calls these men, not me," Fr. LoCoco said. "My task is not for a man to enter the seminary or to get married; my task is to help these young men grow in an awareness of God's will and have the courage to follow it. The environment is rich because of His activity. But also, I look around and (see that) the prayers of so many people in this diocese have an incredible effect. The men in discernment know this, they feel this."

Saint Francis de Sales Seminary is known for its strong formation program (the growth from one sending diocese to six is a testament to that), and Fr. Strand is able to make tangible how that reputation has been developed and blossomed.

"We're not trying to re-invent the wheel," Fr. Strand said. "We're trying to form men who love God and are resilient, and are able to go out in the midst of a very complicated world and preach the Gospel. It's really looking at who the seminary is producing, and that's the biggest selling point. That's why we had 2,000 people at the annual dinner — because our seminarians are in parishes and people love these guys. Our newly



*There are 80 seminarians at Saint Francis de Sales Seminary this year. (Photo courtesy of Saint Francis de Sales Seminary)*

ordained priests are getting out there and offering just a really beautiful witness to their love of God and their love of the Church, and that inspires people."

Fr. LoCoco can also see the type of men who are being produced by the seminary (and he noted the recruitment of prospective priests is more about the quality of men, as opposed to the quantity).

"I am continually edified by the maturity, desire, intellect and prayer of these

men in the house," Fr. LoCoco said. "I genuinely appreciate and enjoy spending time with them. I think it helps for people to recognize that what makes our culture toxic or secular or difficult is not absent from the environment our candidates are drawn from. They are coming out of an environment in which little to none of their friends and family practice the faith. And yet, in this isolation and environment, they continue to manifest a real joy for the Lord and desire for the people of God."

And while Fr. Strand notes the financial support is appreciated, welcomed and necessary, he said there is another simple way to assist in the work they are doing to lay the foundation for the next few decades of the Church.

"We count on and rely upon the prayers of all the people who support the seminary and who love the priesthood," Fr. Strand said. "I humbly ask for prayers. Prayers really keep us rooted in what's most important."

# Counseling Services Facing Increased Need

KAREN MAHONEY  
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

Laura Ramos remembers well the challenge of trying to help a distraught client attempting to leave a domestic violence situation. The woman had mental health issues, but those needed to be addressed after she found safe housing away from her abuser.

“She had no money for housing and, during the pandemic, it was an extra stressor. She didn’t have work because she recently lost her job,” Ramos said. “It was hard to find resources, as she has a family. So we reached out to our community to find help for her so we could address her mental health issues.”

Since the pandemic, the need for mental health treatment has increased due to financial challenges, drug use and better mental health awareness, said Ramos, who added they need funding for more therapists, especially those who can speak Spanish.

Ramos is the director of community counseling for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee’s Catholic Charities. Counseling is one of the many services provided by Catholic Charities and directly funded through the annual Catholic Stewardship Appeal.

According to Jackie Rekowski, director of mission advancement for Catholic Charities, each of the therapists has a caseload of approximately 30 clients per month, which includes families. She said they are at capacity and have a need greater than the number of therapists. They rely on the generous donations to the Catholic Stewardship Appeal for help.

“From the CSA, Catholic Charities receives 20 percent of their support through an annual grant, which benefits our counseling services,” said Rekowski.



▲ Catholic Charities Therapist Bria Halama at the organization’s Waukesha area office. (Photo courtesy of Catholic Charities)

“We do require additional funding from private donors and foundations due to the overall scope of our work.”

Currently in the archdiocese, there are 14 full-time therapists and four student interns serving Community Counseling Services. There are offices in Milwaukee, Sheboygan, Fond du Lac, Waukesha, Racine, Kenosha and Elkhorn. During the pandemic, it was determined that Washington County also needed services, so offices opened in West Bend and Hartford.

“We have bilingual therapists at all our offices and have case managers there, too. Every office has someone who speaks Spanish and shares case management with our counseling services,” Ramos said. “This way, we can help individuals, and families with basic needs — such

as employment and housing — will be assisted by a housing case manager. This person will work with the individual to shore up basic needs so our counseling services can deal with the mental health needs.”

Clients can be supported through an outpatient clinical setting, where licensed therapists and interns provide individual, couple and family support. In some instances, support groups for individuals dealing with certain issues, such as grief, are available.

“This outpatient program is licensed in Wisconsin. We provide counseling services to those who may or may not have insurance,” Ramos said. “We accept most insurance plans and are unique: we can waive the cost of counseling sessions if the person does not have insurance or

if their co-pays and deductibles are too high.”

Community Counseling Services works with children ages 6 and older. Ramos explained that therapists like to incorporate the entire family, as they believe that much of what parents are experiencing is transferred over to the children.

“To qualify for counseling services the intake process is really simple,” Ramos said. “We have streamlined the process where, when a person calls any of our locations, they just need to provide very basic demographic information, such as name, address, phone number and type of counseling needed and that is about it. If they have no insurance, that is not a problem, and we make sure to get a client with a therapist within two weeks.”

If the person calling expresses thoughts of suicide, the situation is addressed immediately; they assess the person and complete a safety plan, Ramos said.

“If a client needs a higher level of care, we refer them to an appropriate clinic, where they can get inpatient care and referrals for treatment,” Ramos said. “At times, hospitals will work with clients on the fees if they don’t have insurance. For example, Aurora has a Helping Hands program, and other hospitals will also work with clients who are facing financial issues.”

While hospital stays for those expressing thoughts of suicide are necessary, they are designed for short-term care to stabilize the client and help keep them from immediate danger. For long-term recovery, Catholic Charities’ Counseling Services are available to help.

For those interested in serving Catholic Charities as a therapist, visit the careers section on the Catholic Charities website at [www.ccmke.org](http://www.ccmke.org).

# Many Children. One Vision.

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee serves more than 28,000 students and their families through its 85 elementary and 16 high schools. Each school is unique but tied together with a common thread and vision.

As former Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Kathleen Cepelka once wrote, “The most defining characteristic — Catholic schools [are] centered in the person of Jesus Christ.”

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee has the ninth-largest Catholic school system in the United States based on the number of schools, and the 14th largest based on the number of students.

Mary Tretow, principal of St. Mary’s Visitation in Elm Grove, agrees: “Everything we do in our Catholic schools is to build the Kingdom of God. That’s what our mission is. The Catholic Stewardship Appeal feeds exactly into what we do.”

Tretow is thankful for all those who donate, from those “who might just be able to give a few dollars or pennies to some of our large donors. It all matters, it all makes a difference because we’re here to build the Kingdom of God.”

She pointed to how the archdiocesan schools office supports Catholic educators’ hard work. From guidance on the curriculum, particularly on how to teach children about Catholic Social Responsibility and their responsibility to the world as faithful Catholics, to leadership training and marketing support so that families can learn that our Catholic schools are phenomenal places to raise our children, Tretow sees the impact the Catholic Stewardship Appeal has on the lives of her students.

“That’s why I would like people to contribute to the appeal; all those things make a difference for all the children



▲ The Archdiocese of Milwaukee has the ninth most Catholic schools in the United States. (Photo by Larry Hanson)

we’re educating,” Tretow said. “When I have 3-year-olds come to school, I look at them, (realizing) eventually they’ll be adults sitting in the pews. As they go through all the cycles of their lives, through all the sacraments, all those things make a difference.”

Tretow is grateful for the support the schools office provides, especially when it comes to safety.

“That’s a huge thing,” Tretow said. “How do we keep our school safe? We spent a lot of time talking about what that looks like. How do we make sure this is a safe environment for everybody to learn? How do we keep our building safe?”

Bruce Varick, associate superintendent of schools, explained that after the Wisconsin legislature passed Act 143 in 2018, the state provided \$100 million

in grants for schools to use to upgrade school security. Those funds were primarily used for additional school cameras, updating locks and improving school entrances. While a number of the schools were able to take advantage of that grant opportunity, Varick explained there’s still a “lot of work” to do.

Visitor identification systems would allow school personnel to quickly identify whether an individual should be denied access to a student or students. Regarding exterior doors, Varick explained that key fobs are safer than keys. Upgrading classroom doors to lock quickly from the inside also provides an additional layer of security. Varick noted, “Studies of previous shooting events have shown that, to date, there has been no instance where the shooter took the time to breach a locked classroom door to get in.”

Finally, the training of staff, not only to prevent tragedies but to respond to critical incidents — any events that disrupt the normal rhythm of the school, including the death of a school community member after an accident or illness — would empower the schools to be Christ to their school families in the midst of sorrow.

“We were able to do that (in 2021) after the (Waukesha) parade tragedy,” Varick said. He hopes to expand the support schools can give.

In December, a two-day formal workshop through the National Association of School Psychologists devoted to psychological first aid and recovery after a critical event was offered to principals and counselors. Varick was grateful for the opportunity to bring this training to the archdiocese. Varick hopes to form Catholic school personnel who would be able to go help another school if a critical incident takes place.

# More Young Men Answer Call to Become Deacons

ANNE TRAUTNER  
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

“It was the biggest group we have had since 1998,” said Dcn. Michael Chmielewski, director of deacon services for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

In September, 16 men were ordained as deacons in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

It also is a younger group than there has been in the past. Currently, 24 men are in the archdiocese’s diaconate formation program. The group of men that started in the diaconate formation program is on average six years younger than the group that was just ordained when they started their formation, according to Dcn. Dale Nees, director of the diaconate formation program.

In fact, the formation program has opened a mother’s nursing room to accommodate wives when they come to programming for their husbands, something that was not offered in the past.

“There has been a real intentional attempt on the part of diaconate formation to call younger guys into the diaconate,” Chmielewski said.

That demographic shift will cause changes in the coming years, in addition to presenting challenges and creating needs. The biggest needs going forward, according to Dcn. Nees, will be space, technological capacity, and furniture that will make it easier to sit through long training sessions.

When Dcn. Nees started working at the archdiocese in 2018, there was an immediate need for an internet connection in the main room where they held training. Over the past four years, that particular room has been updated to be pretty modern. But there isn’t enough capacity to include the wives of the candidates, who participate in part of the formation program with their husbands.

“We need to commit to more space and technology,” Dcn. Nees said.

For one-on-one, personal conversation that takes place during the formation process, that means many more rooms. He could see the program expanding to as many as 45-55 candidates over three different classes.

Deacons can be ordained at age 35 if it is appropriate and makes sense with their family, according to Nees.



▲ Dcn. Lance Tappa (left), shown celebrating his Mass of Thanksgiving in September at St. Mary in Menomonee Falls, was one of 16 men ordained to the permanent diaconate for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee in 2022. (Photo courtesy of the Office of Diaconate Formation)

“I think a big change has been the program’s willingness to look at and encourage vocations, and to help families discern whether the time is right for them,” Dcn. Nees said. “It has been a matter of changing the mindset in the American culture that somebody has to have their family raised with an empty nest and almost ending their secular career in order to become a deacon.”

The deacons are taught from the time they begin the formation program how to integrate work, family and their role as a deacon. Their first priority is family, their second priority is employment and third is the diaconate, according to Dcn. Chmielewski.

“When they put together their covenant for service to the parish, they have to keep in mind that their primary responsibility remains family and their employment because their employment supports the family,” Dcn. Chmielewski said.

There are three areas in which deacons serve. The first is the liturgy. Deacons assist at Masses, baptisms and weddings.

The second piece is service to the Word. Deacons teach Catholic Formation, confirmation, RCIA, marriage preparation and baptism preparation classes.

The third area is charitable service to the outlying community.

“We are called to serve and bring Jesus to places where the people can’t get to necessarily, so you’re talking about service to nursing homes, hospices, hospitals and prisons,” Chmielewski said.

Pastors across the archdiocese are grateful for the increase in the number of deacons. Great partnerships are being created as a result.

“I don’t know what I would do without them,” said Fr. Jordan Berghouse, administrator of St. James in Mukwonago and St. Theresa in Eagle.

The parishes benefit from having deacons.

“It’s great to have them preach. We hear ourselves every day as priests, so it’s nice to be able to listen to somebody else once in a while,” Fr. Berghouse said. “And then, of course, deacons have their own life experiences. Sometimes, parishioners might like to talk to a deacon who maybe understands in a more in-depth way the intricacies of married life.”

The trend toward having more deacons is evident in Fr. Berghouse’s two parishes, where there are currently three more men preparing for the diaconate.

Through both the diaconate formation program and the deacon services program, the Milwaukee Archdiocese supports deacons from the very beginning of formation through their entire life as a deacon. But more than that, the programs support the deacons’ families as well.

“Recognizing the importance of the family in a ministry where 92-95 percent of the people are married is incredibly important in a formation program,” Dcn. Nees said.

And now, the focus includes younger families. Currently, 15 percent of those preparing to become deacons are ages 30 to 40. Prior to 2020, there were none in that age category, according to Dcn. Nees.

“I think it screams a lot of hope for the Church,” Nees said.

# Let's light this world to heaven

## Support the Catholic Stewardship Appeal

### 2023 Appeal Goal: \$8.1 million



21%

#### SERVING THOSE IN NEED

Catholic Charities and other ministries funded by the Appeal help individuals and families who are facing tough times through counseling and outreach services.



46%

#### FORMING PRIESTS AND DEACONS AND FOSTERING PARISH LEADERSHIP

The Appeal supports those discerning a vocation to ordained ministry through St. Frances de Sales Seminary and the Office for Diaconate Formation, as well as providing professional development for ordained and lay leaders.



11%

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Your contribution funds leadership and services that enable our Catholic schools and parish religious education programs to transform our communities into centers of faith through quality Catholic formation.



22%

#### STRENGTHENING PARISH MINISTRIES AND PROMOTING EVANGELIZATION

Among others, your gift supports evangelization efforts, resources for Mass and music ministry, and planning, budgeting, and HR services.

*\* Percentages are based on the spend of funds in 2021, the most recent data available, and is an approximation of how your gift will be used in 2023.*

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Milwaukee, WI 53207-0912

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**3. Donate online:** Visit [www.catholicappeal.org](http://www.catholicappeal.org)  
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