If there is one word that actually causes a person to reach down, deep down into their very soul, then that word is Love.

Jesus knows this well, for it is the word that he used to describe the relationship between himself and the Father and through the Holy Spirit into us. And this relationship endures, remains, abides!

Love Abides is the theme chosen to introduce the Catholic Services Appeal (CSA) this year. The Church is asking us to promote and to support our faith on the many levels of our personal and family life, parish ministries and the wider responsibilities of our diocese. All of these elements come together in one word: Love. I once heard that the object or direction of love is never a thing although it may first appear to be so. The destination of love is always a person. And this person is Jesus who is present to us on a personal level in the sacraments and in our parish faith community and in the ministry of our diocese.

If we were to draw a line and trace the beginning of love we would find ourselves starting at the moment we came into this world through the loving union
of our mother and father. And we would find that line of love consecrated in the waters of Baptism. At the moment of our Baptism we were infused with the theological virtues of faith, of hope and of love.

“So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

—I Cor. 13:13

And then, we start to live it. To live love! We have the graces of the sacraments and the loving support of our family and faith community. And we begin and begin over again and we practice and we discover love. If we continue along this path and our mind and spirit develops in a holy way and then the day comes when we discover the value of true love, of sacrifice. Sacrifice is a kind of “holy game” that Jesus plays with us. At first we don’t realize the sacrifices of our parents and guardians, the church and her priests, or other persons in our lives that give to us. It is hidden to us, but one day we have a moment of awakening! The best role model of spiritual awakening just has to be St. Augustine. His confessions are a pattern for self-discovery that have endured and remain and abide in the Church. He got it right! The insight of St. Augustine is that giving sacrificially unites us with the ultimate object of love who is a person, a divine person, Jesus.

“Give yourself to me, O my God. I love you and if my love is too small a thing, grant me to love more intensely.”

—Confessions XII

Soon we will begin to receive the familiar CSA material in the mail and in our parishes. We will be encouraged to give, and even more, to unite ourselves with the Church more intensely by giving sacrificially. How will we, how will I continue to endure, remain and abide in love?
CSA Parish Incentive Program

2017 WINNERS

St. Eugene Parish, McGregor
Dolores Parish, Austin
St. Mary Parish, Lockhart
St. Stephen Parish, Salado
St. Joseph Parish, Mason

DID YOU KNOW?

Last year Bishop Vásquez launched the inaugural Parish Incentive Program in conjunction with the Catholic Services Appeal (CSA) donor reception. Five parishes were each granted $5,000 for parish operations (see winners at left). Parishes were measured on qualifying goal achievements related to the CSA and received one ticket for each of the qualifying measurements achieved. The maximum amount of tickets a parish could receive was six.

This year Bishop Vásquez will grant $5,000 each to eight parishes and one parish will be granted $10,000 (for parish operations). The parishes that achieved the maximum six tickets will be eligible for the $10,000 drawing. The nine winning tickets will be drawn at the donor reception on October 13.

To see the reaction of the winners and what they used their grants for, go to: www.austindiocese.org/parish-incentive-program
Last month, Bishop Joe S. Vásquez was interviewed for a brief question and answer session in “The Catholic Spirit.” He was asked how the Encountering Christ campaign differs from the Catholic Services Appeal. Succinctly, his answer was, “The capital campaign is a long-range plan that looks to the future and goes beyond our immediate needs. The Catholic Services Appeal, which is our annual diocesan appeal, focuses on our immediate needs as a diocese and helps fund our ongoing operational expenses.”

The **CATHOLIC SERVICES APPEAL (CSA)**, along with other revenue sources, funds the annual operational budget for the diocese and provides services to more than 140,000 families in 123 parishes and 22 schools.

The CSA comprises approximately 40% of the operational budget of the diocese from the generosity of almost 21,000 annual donors. Each October, every Catholic family is invited to consider their support for the appeal from an in-pew appeal and mailed invitation from Bishop Vásquez.

More information can be found in the brochure that will be included in this mailing. Last year, more than 20,600 donors generously helped us to raise $6.1 million in support of the work of the Church.

The **ENCOUNTERING CHRIST CAMPAIGN** was born out of our Pastoral Plan, “An Encounter that Leads to Transformation” which is being implemented across the diocese. The pastoral plan, completed four years ago, was a year-long process of prayer, reflection and discussion to identify how the people, parishes, schools and diocesan offices might discover new paths on our common journey to Jesus Christ. The Encountering Christ campaign will impact individual lives and ministerial structures in four key ways – Strengthening Our Parishes, Supporting Our Clergy, Emerging Disciples and Embracing Discipleship. Examples within these four areas include: Catholic Charities, endowed dollars to provide scholarships for families attending our Catholic Schools, funding to expand parishes in areas of tremendous growth, endowed funds for rural parishes, expansion of our campus ministry, expansion for Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center and St. John Paul II Retirement Center; fully fund our priest pension plan; and provide an additional revenue to fund the ongoing cost of forming our seminarians.

**In a literal way, what is the difference between the CSA and the capital campaign?**

**The CSA supports the good works of the Church each year.** These funds are needed every year to maintain the mission of the diocese. The average CSA donor will make a one-time gift, or a pledge paid over ten months, of approximately $250 each November.

The Encountering Christ campaign is a little different. **The active phase of the campaign will take place in each of our 123 parishes over the next eighteen months and will conclude with pledge redemption in 2023.** Gifts made to Encountering Christ can be pledged over five years to provide families with the opportunity to make a larger, long-term commitment over and above their giving to their parish and the CSA.

A more practical example is the funding needed for our seminarians. Each year, the diocese invests nearly $2 million to educate and form the next generation of priests. The CSA is vital to the seminarians and funding is needed for this every year. In contrast, if we are to prepare for the future needs of our ever-growing diocese, we must be prepared to support our seminarians well into the future. A $5 million endowment created through the Encountering Christ campaign will provide about $200,000 annually. This annual distribution from the endowment allows the diocese to support our seminarians without relying completely on the CSA.
To raise awareness and support for the charitable, educational, and spiritual ministries of the Diocese of Austin, we are rallying the Catholic community by participating in the annual #IGIVECATHOLIC GIVING DAY. We will celebrate this day of Catholic giving on November 27 also known as #GIVING TUESDAY, a global day devoted to giving.

Why are online giving days important for our parishes, schools, ministries and other nonprofits of the diocese? Research shows us that:

- Giving days are attractive to a broad range of parishioners, alumni and supporters—from individuals in their 20s through their 70s and beyond—and they are a great way to attract new and younger supporters, ensuring long-term sustainability.

- Compared to traditional campaigns, staff time required to launch online campaigns decreases by 50% to 80%.

We believe in the generosity of Catholics in our diocese. Working with our partner, our goal is to exceed last year’s amazing $3.6 million in charitable gifts for 600+ participating parishes, schools, and nonprofits representing 17 arch/dioceses across the country. This year’s goal is to raise $100,000 within our diocese—for those parishes, schools and nonprofits participating in the 24-hour giving day.

St. Mary’s Cathedral and Giving Day

Every week, St. Mary’s Cathedral was printing worship aids for hundreds of parishioners and the hymnals in the pews were falling apart with age and use. The church responded to this need by focusing their #IGIVECATHOLIC campaign on the purchase of new missals and hymnals to replace the inefficient system. The parish utilized every communication method available to promote the drive for new books. By using social media, bulletin and pulpit announcements, and individual meetings with parishioners, the parish was able to raise almost $24,000 towards the purchase of 475 St. Michael’s Hymnals, 250 Lumen Christi Missals and 250 St. Edmond Campion Missals that include the choir and organ hymnals. Parishioners were moved by the idea of dedicating the books in honor or memorial of theirs loved ones, which really helped the campaign succeed. The parish now saves on printing and paper costs. The savings are used to further ministry efforts and parishioners are enjoying the new books.
John Edward McCarthy, a Roman Catholic bishop who served in Houston and Austin and provided national leadership for the Church in its work to address systemic poverty, died Aug. 18, in his home in Austin. His ministry started at St. Pius Parish, Pasadena, where he inaugurated a social ministry program. A two-year stint in Washington, D.C., from 1967 to 1969 allowed him to be one of the founders of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, now the U.S. bishops’ major domestic anti-poverty effort. Father McCarthy returned to Houston in 1969 and soon thereafter was named executive director of the Texas Catholic Conference. In 1986 he was appointed the third bishop of Austin and began efforts to meet the needs of the diocese, establishing missionary programs abroad and at home, encouraging parishes to bolster their social advocacy and charity work, and opening Catholic schools and parishes. He also launched its first Synod, expanded its retreat center, and established the Diocesan Law Project.

Bishop McCarthy’s commitment lives on as it was his request that donations be made to his memorial fund. Donations can be made to: Bishop John E. McCarthy Memorial Fund, Diocese of Austin, 6225 E US 290 HWY SVRD EB, Austin, Texas 78723 or online at www.austindiocese.org.