

## **God's Gift Appeal helps bring the Catholic faith to many people**

Tanya Watterud

The 2010 God's Gift Appeal kicked off Jan. 17 with the first of seven Open Forums through which Bishop Samuel Aquila meets with parishioners in the Diocese of Fargo's seven deaneries (regions). Father Bernie Schneider hosted the Jan. 17 Open Forum at St. Timothy's Catholic Church in Manvel. (See related story on this page.)

The theme for the 2010 God's Gift Appeal is "For we are God's co-workers, you are God's field, God's building."

In a DVD message viewed at the Open Forums, which will also be shown at all parishes in the next few weeks, Bishop Aquila explained the significance of this quote from 1 Corinthians 3:9 in this Year for Priests, which followed the Year of St. Paul.

"Our theme for the God's Gift Appeal this year comes from St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians in which he reflects upon the complementary roles of clergy and laity. Paul tells of how he and Apollos were chosen by God to go out and preach the good news. Then Paul asks, 'What is Apollos, after all, and what is Paul? Ministers through whom you became believers, just as the Lord assigned each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth. We are God's co-workers.'" Priests, then, are God's co-workers in that they teach the faith, provide the sacraments to the faithful and encourage growth in our faith lives. The laity, too, are co-workers with God, but in a different way.

"Then what is your role as parishioners, as Catholic families, as young people who are learning about your Catholic faith?" Bishop Aquila asks in the DVD message. "St. Paul reminds us that 'you are God's field, God's building'. You receive God's gifts freely through the sacraments, through the work that you do and through the unique talents God has given personally to you. As Catholics you build upon these gifts and share them with others. Your participation in handing on the truths of our Catholic faith is essential for the teachings of Christ to flourish both in the diocese and throughout the world."

The DVD highlights several diocesan programs, made possible in part through donations to the God's Gift Appeal, that serve parishioners and others throughout the diocese. The programs are just a small sampling of the numerous efforts noted in the God's Gift Appeal brochure which all registered Catholic households will receive. The DVD also highlights two parishes – St. Mary's in Sheldon and St. Michael's in Grand Forks – which celebrated anniversaries in 2009. The DVD can be viewed on the diocesan Web site at [www.fargodiocese.org/stewardship/godsgift.htm](http://www.fargodiocese.org/stewardship/godsgift.htm).

The goal for the 2010 God's Gift Appeal is \$2,572,100. As you will read in Bishop Aquila's column on page 3 of this issue of New Earth and in the 2009 Appeal report on page....., the 2009 goal of \$2,521,660 was nearly met (98 percent) despite the many difficulties the faithful of the diocese experienced in 2009, including flooding, weather challenges affecting agriculture and other economic hardships. If every parish household would give even a very small amount to the Appeal, the programs of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Fargo could reach out to many more people.

A primary focus of the Appeal this year is to increase the percentage of parishioners who participate in the Appeal. Parishioners' gifts to the God's Gift Appeal provide over 56 percent of the annual funding for more than 40 ministries that serve people within the diocese and outside of its borders. These ministries include, but are not limited to, catechesis and evangelization, the Newman Centers on college campuses, the Education for Parish Service program, special needs ministry, vocations to the priesthood and the permanent diaconate, continuing education for priests, respect for life ministry, the Marriage Tribunal, the Rural Life Conference, migrant programs, sick and elderly priests, communications including the Sunday TV Mass Apostolate, New Earth and other communications, and many more. God's Gift Appeal donations also support the many programs of Catholic Charities North Dakota, including guardianship of vulnerable adults, adoption services, services for those who are pregnant, counseling, and more.

The Diocese of Fargo serves more than 85,000 Catholics in the eastern half of North Dakota. Seventeen men are currently studying for the priesthood at the minor seminary and major seminary levels.

*Watch for more information about the God's Gift Appeal in the February issue of New Earth.*