

PARISH LEADERSHIP HANDBOOK

In Christ, We Are *One*



Diocese of Erie
2026 Catholic
Services Appeal



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✦ ENCOUNTER
✦ LIVE
✦ SHARE



2026 Appeal At-A-Glance

Important Dates

February 7/8, 2026 Promotion Weekend

February 14/15, 2026 Commitment Weekend

February 21/22, 2026 Follow-Up Weekend

Contacts



Questions about campaign logistics?

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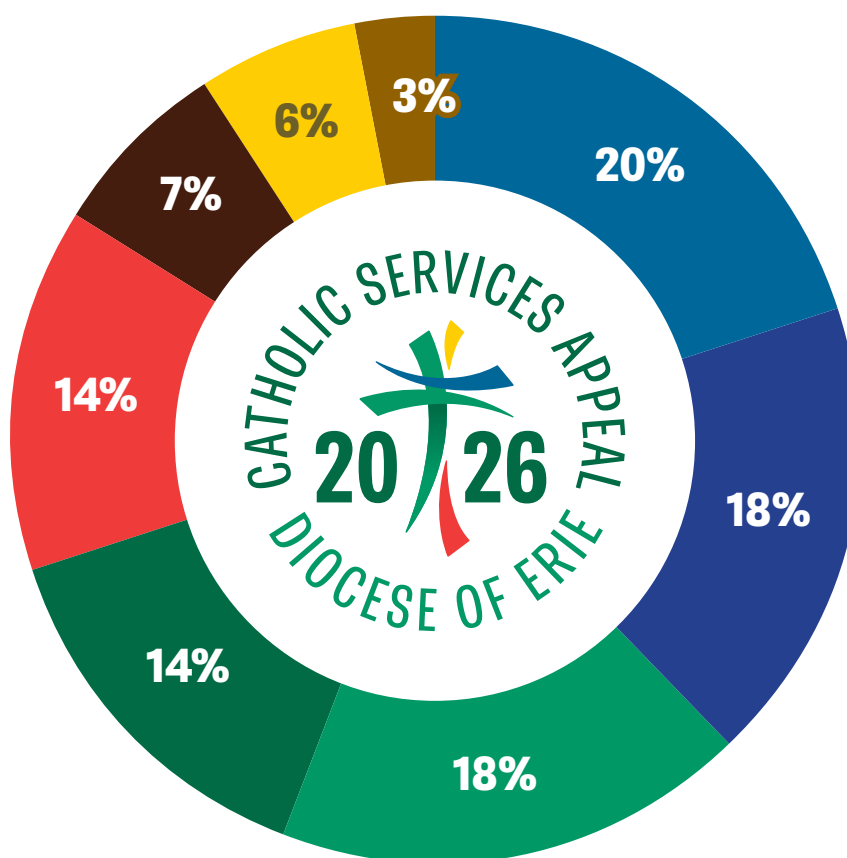
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2026 CSA Goal & Allocations



The Catholic Services Appeal helps the Diocese of Erie fulfill its mission to evangelize, educate, serve, proclaim the Word, and celebrate the sacraments throughout 13 counties in northwest Pennsylvania.

Donations to the CSA make the following work of the Gospel possible:



2026 CSA Goal
TOTAL: \$4,235,000

20% Catholic Schools & Tuition Assistance (\$858,421)

- ◆ Supports Catholic school mission and identity
- ◆ Provides tuition assistance across the diocese
- ◆ Strengthens leadership through training and resources
- ◆ Assists with accreditation, enrollment and operational needs
- ◆ Ensures safe environments for children and youth

18% Communications (\$752,907)

- ◆ Produces Faith magazine for 40,000 households, diocesan E-News and social media platforms
- ◆ Supports parishes with digital tools for websites, bulletins, graphic and messaging
- ◆ Strategic communications for the bishop, clergy, ministries and Catholic schools
- ◆ Provides media relations, press coverage and evangelization content

14% Clergy Services (\$586,957)

- ◆ Provides retreats, days of recollection, study days and continuing formation for priests and deacons
- ◆ Supports clergy assignments, transitions and pastoral planning
- ◆ Ensures sacramental coverage and pastoral support across the diocese

6% Seminary & Vocations (\$246,514)

- ◆ Supports seminarians with housing, food and formation
- ◆ Provides education, mentorship and spiritual development
- ◆ Strengthens diocesan vocation outreach and discernment programs

18% Catholic Charities (\$776,000)

- ◆ Provides compassionate outreach across all 13 counties through a network of ministries — including Catholic Charities Counseling and Adoption Services, Christ the King Manor, Good Samaritan Center, Prince of Peace Center, Saint John XXIII Home, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary Center and Saint Martin Center — offering food assistance, housing support, counseling, emergency aid and long-term stability services
- ◆ Strengthens parish outreach through social services, respect life and social justice support
- ◆ Assists vulnerable families with emergency aid for housing, utilities and basic needs
- ◆ Advances diocesan work in maternal support, anti-trafficking efforts, adoption and family counseling

14% Faith Formation (\$576,040)

- ◆ Trains and mentors 500+ catechists and parish leaders
- ◆ Supports parish religious education and sacramental preparation
- ◆ Provides OCIA, marriage prep, family life and NFP support
- ◆ Leads diocesan retreats, events and youth/young adult initiatives including NCYC

7% Pastoral Services (\$293,607)

- ◆ Coordinates diocesan liturgies and sacramental celebrations like Chrism Mass and Confirmation
- ◆ Supports chaplaincy in hospitals, prisons and nursing homes
- ◆ Provides training for pastoral ministers and bereavement teams

3% Diocesan & International Missions (\$144,554)

- ◆ Supports national and global missionary outreach
- ◆ Sustains the Mission of Friendship in Mérida, serving 150+ families yearly
- ◆ Provides mission education and formation for parishes and schools

2026 Catholic Services Appeal Timeline



January

Planning

Decide your parish project if you have not already done so.

February 7/8

Promotion Weekend

- ◆ Hang posters, share bulletin announcement, include intention in Prayer of the Faithful and begin digital communications.
- ◆ A letter from the pastor, personalized pledge card and appeal brochure will be mailed by the diocese to all parishioners in early February.
- ◆ The February issue of *Faith* magazine focusing on what the CSA supports will also arrive in parishioner homes in early February.

February 14/15

Commitment Weekend

- ◆ Invite parishioners to make a commitment to the CSA.
- ◆ Show the CSA Video. If unable to show the CSA video, pastor or lay witness speakers should provide a brief testimony.
- ◆ Use the Pulpit Remarks and the Steps for a Successful In-Pew Process for guidance.
- ◆ Include provided insert and announcement in your bulletin.
- ◆ Include intention in Prayer of the Faithful and continue digital communications.

February 21/22

Follow-up Weekend

Share bulletin announcement, include intention in Prayer of the Faithful and continue to mention the CSA at all masses and in digital communications.

March 27

First CSA Input Deadline

Have all pledges/gifts updated in your database. Deadline dates can be found on the diocesan website.

Week of April 13

Follow-Up Mailing

A follow-up letter from pastors will be mailed from the diocese to parishioners who have not made a pledge or gift to this year's CSA but have given to the CSA in other years. If you chose to opt-out, you should carry out the follow-up mailing at this time. *Refer to page 7 for further details.*

**Thank you and payment reminder mailings will be facilitated by the diocese.*

Best Practices for a Successful CSA



- ♦ The intentional support and leadership of pastors and parish leaders in conducting a well-planned in-pew process is vital to the success of the CSA. In talking about the appeal from the pulpit over multiple weekends, you can educate on the ministries of the diocese that serve all our parishes and emphasize the importance of uniting for this important initiative.
- ♦ Promote the CSA using posters, brochures, CSA video, digital messaging, and bulletin insert.
- ♦ All parishes should have someone encourage CSA participation from the pulpit. Refer to the information in the CSA feature in the February 2026 issue of *Faith Magazine*, the CSA brochure, and this Parish Leadership Handbook for talking points.
- ♦ The pages of this Parish Leadership Handbook include suggested text for letters and messaging to assist you in your CSA campaign. Feel free to adjust and personalize them for your own parish. We encourage you to take advantage of these important resources to assist you in effectively communicating the appeal. The examples, digital versions of which are available at www.eriercd.org/Catholic-Services-Appeal-CSA-Materials.html (or scan the QR code below), include:
 - ▷ Sample Pulpit/Homily Remarks
 - ▷ Sample Bulletin Announcements
 - ▷ Sample Petitions for Prayer of the Faithful
 - ▷ Sample Lapsed Donor (LYBUNT/SYBUNT) Follow Up Letter
 - ▷ Sample Script for In Person/Phone Asks
- ♦ Pledge payments are to be made directly to the parish. Payment reminders will be sent by the Diocese to parishioners who make a pledge. Those who make a pledge will have the option to choose the frequency of their reminder; monthly, bi-monthly, or twice (May & November) during the ten-month pledge period.
- ♦ Parishes who identify a specific project for their CSA overage do well. Parishioners like to know how their CSA funds help their parish as well as the entire diocese.
- ♦ To assist you in these efforts, unless you choose to opt out, a follow-up letter from pastors will be personalized with your parish name and mailed by the diocese to parishioners who have not made a pledge or gift to this year's CSA but have given to the CSA in other years. The follow-up letters will be mailed the week of April 13.



Steps for a Successful In-Pew Process



1

STEP 1:

Prepare the church and volunteers for Commitment Weekend

- ◆ Place pledge envelopes and pencils at the ends of the pews or pass out to people as they enter the church. Have extras available.
- ◆ Do a video test run beforehand to test the volume and ensure everything is working properly.
- ◆ Plan and rehearse the pledge envelope collection process with ushers/volunteers and have a coordinator at the back of the church facilitating the collection process.

2

STEP 2:

Communicate the impact of gifts to the CSA

- ◆ Remember that the pastor's leadership is key to the process. His disposition sets the tone for your parishioners. It is important to remain positive and treat the process as a celebration.
- ◆ Extend heartfelt gratitude and thanks to all parishioners.
- ◆ Show the CSA Video. If unable to show the CSA video, pastor or lay witness speakers should provide a brief testimony.
- ◆ Share the amount of your parish goal.

3

STEP 3:

Pastor should lead parishioners by example during the in-pew solicitation

- ◆ Invite every family to consider supporting the vital services and programs provided by the diocese and the parish by making a commitment today.
- ◆ The pastor should let parishioners know that he is also making a commitment right now.
- ◆ Remind parishioners of the importance of their participation – no matter how small the gift.
- ◆ Ask them to consider making a pledge and including an initial payment with their pledge.
- ◆ Let them know of the option to receive a pledge reminder via e-mail which will also save on expenses.
- ◆ Be sure to explain that they have the option to choose how often they would like to get a reminder; monthly, bi-monthly, or twice during the ten-month period.
- ◆ Encourage parishioners to complete the envelopes in church. This will save the parish time and expense by not having to follow-up with those who do not complete an envelope today.
- ◆ Allow two to three minutes for parishioners to make their pledge/gift.
- ◆ Once again, extend heartfelt gratitude and thanks to all parishioners.

Implementing an Effective Follow-Up



Direct Mail Follow-Up

- ♦ A follow-up letter from pastors will be personalized with your parish name and mailed by the diocese to parishioners who have not made a pledge or gift to this year's CSA but have given to the CSA in other years. *This letter can be found on pages 13-14.*
- ♦ We do not recommend mailing a follow-up letter to those who have never given, as studies have shown their response rate for direct mailings to be extremely low.
- ♦ To ensure that parishioners who have already given are not sent the follow-up letter, please update parish CSA gift information by Monday, March 23, 2026.
- ♦ If you prefer to opt out from your parishioners being included in this diocesan-wide follow-up mailing so that you may further personalize the letter to fit your parish needs and mail the letters directly, please notify Julia Cooney about your decision to opt out by March 16, 2026.
- ♦ If you opt-out of the centralized follow-up letter and would like assistance in creating your mailing list for this 'LYBUNT/SYBUNT' follow up letter, please contact Ministry Platform support. *['LYBUNT' stands for 'last year but unfortunately not this,' and 'SYBUNT' stands for 'some years but unfortunately not this.']*

Phone Follow-Up

- ♦ Telephone contact is a very effective follow-up method.
- ♦ This method is particularly effective in reaching out to lapsed donors.
- ♦ Invite a group of parishioners to come to a room at the parish. We suggest doing it as a group as opposed to giving out lists for people to call at home. This is more effective and can be an enjoyable way of securing gifts for the CSA.
- ♦ Callers can record information from the phone call on a pledge envelope. The completed pledge envelope should be returned to the parish office for recording in the database.

Digital Communications Follow-Up

- ♦ Communicating with your parishioners using a digital format is now more important than ever.
- ♦ Consider utilizing the following means to communicate with your parishioners about the CSA:
 - ▷ Email/e-newsletter
 - ▷ Website
 - ▷ FB/other social media
 - ▷ Mention CSA during your live stream Masses

Sample Pulpit Remarks



For Promotion Sunday (February 7/8)



Every year, the bishop asks the faithful throughout the Diocese of Erie to support the Catholic Services Appeal (CSA), which is the annual fundraising campaign of the diocese. The CSA funds programs and ministries that are beyond the resources of any one parish. Every diocesan office and ministry supported by the CSA, such as the Catholic Schools Office, Office of Faith Formation, Catholic Charities, and Office of Communications, are available to assist in every area of the diocese. The CSA reminds us that we are all part of the same Catholic family and that the work of the diocese is the work of the Church. By joining together, we can accomplish more than any one parish can accomplish on its own.

Be on the lookout for your personal invitation in the mail. We invite you to bring your pledge card with you to Mass next Sunday. If you should happen to forget yours, pledge envelopes will be available. Please prayerfully consider making a gift to support the CSA.



For Commitment Sunday (February 14/15)



Good morning! (Good evening!) I would like to begin by thanking each one of you for your commitment to our parish and the mission of the Church. I am blessed and honored to serve such a vibrant community of faith and witness the actions of the Holy Spirit in our parish life.

Today, we celebrate Commitment Sunday for the Catholic Services Appeal. Each year, the CSA gives us the opportunity to support the essential daily ministries and programs of the church, beyond what our parish can do on its own. Inspired by the words of Pope Leo XIV, this year's theme, *In Christ, We Are One*, invites us to encounter Christ, live His presence, and share Him with others.

Just as Christ gives Himself to us in the Eucharist out of love, we are called to share His love with others. This year, our parish goal is **\$XX**. Our gifts to the CSA are put to work immediately to carry out the work of the Gospel.

(Share the CSA video at this time. If unable to do so, share a brief personal testimony of how you have witnessed/experienced the impact of the ministries or programs supported by the Appeal.)

The Church serves each of us and our support is essential in continuing God's work in our area. Every CSA donation also brings us closer to being able to complete our own parish project **[describe parish project]**. I ask for your support to share the love of Christ with a gift to the CSA.

I will be making my pledge today, and I invite each of you to join me, as a tangible sign of our unity. No gift is too small, but please give as generously as you can.

There is a pledge envelope in the pew. I encourage you to take a few minutes to fill it out and place it in the collection basket when it comes around. (To provide guidance on how to fill out pledge envelopes, see Step 3 of Steps for a Successful In-Pew Process on page 6.)

Thank you for your time and generosity. Our gifts, combined with the gifts of all our brothers and sisters throughout our diocese, go a long way in supporting our Church. Together, *In Christ, We Are One*.

Sample Bulletin Announcements



February 7/8 ♦ Promotion Weekend



The 2026 Catholic Services Appeal *In Christ, We Are One* Commitment Sunday will be held next weekend in our parish. Please be on the lookout for your personal invitation in the mail. The CSA is an opportunity for Catholics throughout the diocese to unite in carrying out the work of the Gospel. The CSA reminds us that we are all part of the same Catholic family and that the work of the diocese is the work of the Church.

The Church serves each of us and our support is essential in continuing God's work in our area. Every CSA donation also brings us closer to being able to complete our own parish project **[describe parish project]**. No gift is too small, but please give as generously as you can.

February 14/15 ♦ Commitment Weekend



Today is Commitment Sunday for the 2026 Catholic Services Appeal *In Christ, We Are One*. The CSA is essential to carrying out the Church's mission to evangelize, educate, serve, proclaim the Word, celebrate the sacraments, and provide hope to people in need, beyond what any parish can provide on its own.

As baptized Catholics, Christ calls each one of us to share His love and build up His Church. Through our gifts to the CSA, we carry out His life-giving mission. Thank you for your faithful generosity and prayers for the CSA.



February 21/22 ♦ Follow-Up Weekend



A sincere thank you to all who made a pledge and/or gift to the Catholic Services Appeal. Your faithful commitment allows us to live out the mission of the Church. As your pastor, I am inspired and grateful for your support. Together, *In Christ, We Are One*.

Today our parish is at **XX%** percentage of goal. If you have not yet made a commitment, it is not too late. Just drop your pledge card or envelope marked 'CSA' in the collection basket or turn it in at the parish office. Your generosity is greatly appreciated. As a reminder, anything over goal will be used to **[describe parish project]**.

Alternate Ongoing Announcement



The CSA supports essential daily ministries and programs of the Catholic Church throughout our diocese that are only made possible thanks to your collective generosity. The CSA is essential to helping the Diocese of Erie fulfill its mission to evangelize, educate, serve, proclaim the Word, celebrate the sacraments, and provide hope to people in need, beyond what any parish can provide on its own.

Our parish goal this year is **\$XX**. We are currently at **\$XX**. Please join other Catholics from across the 13 counties of our diocese in supporting this important appeal that transforms lives throughout northwestern Pennsylvania. Your participation ensures the success of the CSA, supports our parish needs, and is a sign of our unity. Together, *In Christ, We Are One*.



Sample Petitions for Prayer of the Faithful



February 7/8 Promotion Weekend



For the success of the Catholic Services Appeal, that we may all do what we can to be generous with our gifts and respond in faith to sustain and build our local Church as one in Christ. We pray to the Lord.

February 14/15 Commitment Weekend



For the success of the Catholic Services Appeal, that one in Christ, we may all generously share our gifts to continue the mission of the Church in our parish and throughout the Diocese of Erie. We pray to the Lord.

Weeks Following Commitment Weekend



1. For those that have committed to serving our Church financially with their gifts to the Catholic Services Appeal. We pray to the Lord.
2. For all the intentions that have been entrusted to us on the CSA *In Christ, We Are One* pledge cards. We pray to the Lord.
3. For our parish community, that we continue to use the gifts God has given us to serve our brothers and sisters in need as one in Christ. We pray to the Lord.

Suggested Ways to Honor Prayer Intentions



- ◆ Have pastor pray for the intentions individually in a special way.
- ◆ Conduct a special Holy Hour or Rosary dedicated to the prayer intentions.

Continue to use this petition during the Prayer of the Faithful for multiple weeks: For all the intentions that have been entrusted to us on the CSA *In Christ, We Are One* pledge cards. We pray to the Lord.

Sample Lapsed Donor (LYBUNT/SYBUNT) Follow-Up Letter

This follow-up letter from pastors will be personalized with your parish name and mailed during the week of April 13 to parishioners who have not made a pledge or gift to this year's CSA but have given to the CSA in other years.

If you prefer to opt out from your parishioners being included in this diocesan-wide follow-up mailing, you are free to personalize the letter to fit your parish needs and mail the letters directly from the parish. Please notify Julia Cooney about your decision to opt out by March 16, 2026.

For assistance in creating your mailing list for this 'LYBUNT/SYBUNT' follow up letter, please contact Ministry Platform support. ['LYBUNT' stands for 'last year but unfortunately not this,' and 'SYBUNT' stands for 'some years but unfortunately not this.']

[sample letter on next page>>](#)



Sample Lapsed Donor (LYBUNT/SYBUNT) Follow-Up Letter, *continued*

[Month] 2026

Dear [Informal Name],

Christ is Risen! Alleluia! As we celebrate the glory of the risen Christ, thank you for all you do for [Name of parish], and for the many ways you live out your faith in daily life.

During these past few weeks, we have been working together as a parish family to actively raise funds for the Catholic Services Appeal (CSA). This annual initiative gives us the opportunity to sustain sacramental life across 13 counties; enliven parish formation programs and Catholic education; and support missions, charitable works and evangelization efforts, beyond what our parish can do on its own.

Gifts to the CSA support our parish by funding our annual contribution that helps make the work of vital diocesan ministries possible. [Name of parish] keeps 100% of gifts raised beyond our parish goal for the needs of our parish.

If this letter and your gift have crossed in the mail, please accept my sincere gratitude. If you have not yet given, I invite you to prayerfully consider how you and your family can respond to this year's CSA. Each gift, no matter the size, is a tangible expression of our shared unity.

Thank you for your generosity, prayers and commitment to [Name of parish]. May the joy of the Resurrection inspire us to continue sharing His love. Together, *In Christ, We Are One*.

With heartfelt prayers and gratitude,

Pastor Name

Pastor/Title

P.S. If you are enclosing a check with the pledge envelope, please make it out to [Name of parish].

Sample Script for In Person/Phone Asks



Hello, may I speak with Mr./Mrs. **(name)** ?

Hello, **(Mr./Mrs./or first name)**, this is **(caller name)** and I am calling on behalf of **(Parish Name)**, Do you have a few minutes? I am a volunteer for this year's Catholic Services Appeal, and my goal is to encourage contributions from as many parishioners as possible. The appeal supports critical ministries and programs throughout our diocese that go beyond what our parishes can provide on their own. Every Catholic in our diocese and each one of our parishes is served by the CSA, and thousands throughout our diocese receive hope and healing thanks to the services and ministries supported by the CSA. Additionally, every dollar raised over our parish goal this year will go towards **(details of parish project)**.



Previous Donor

Last year you gave a very generous gift of **\$XX** to the appeal. Would you be able to increase your contribution or match what you gave last year?

Non-Donor

I noticed you have not responded to the appeal this year, and we are hoping we can count on your support. Every gift has impact, no matter how modest. Your gift is a sign of our unity. Together, *In Christ, We Are One*. Can we count on your support?

If Gift Is Secured

Thank you for your generosity. I will record your pledge and forward it to the parish office. You will receive a pledge reminder and reply envelope for your convenience. Thank you again for your time and for supporting the appeal.

Unable to Give

I am sorry you are not able to give at this time. Your prayers for the success of the appeal would be much appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Prayer for the Catholic Services Appeal

*God of unity and peace,
Through Christ your Son,
you call us to encounter your mercy in the sacraments,
to live your compassion in our lives,
and to share your Good News as one family.*

*Through the power of your Spirit,
help us to live as Christ each day—
to see as he sees,
to love as he loves,
to serve as he serves—
That our witness will proclaim:
“In Christ, we are one.”*

*For he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever.*

Amen.



Need Assistance?

Please contact **Julia Cooney** at the Catholic Foundation
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