

Grateful Hearts Serving Others



ANNUAL CATHOLIC APPEAL
BUILD MY CHURCH

GUEST SPEAKER
MANUAL & WORKBOOK



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

Mosaic on display at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis. Photo courtesy Sam Pentress.

Critical Information

Guest Speaker Manual

2026 ACA COMMUNICATIONS MESSAGE:

Grateful Hearts Serving Others

As a guest speaker, you play a central role in inviting others to actively live their Catholic faith. Your presentation will inspire and motivate many people to support those in our community who rely on parishes, schools, and ministries in so many ways.

A special website has been created for the 2026 *Annual Catholic Appeal*. Invite people to visit aca.archstl.org to learn more about how the *Appeal* has impacted others. People can also use the QR code that is on all materials.

Thank you for speaking on behalf of those who will benefit from the *Appeal*.

YOUR TALK

To ensure that all parishioners hear a unified message, we ask that you keep the following requests in mind as you compose your talk.

- **Pray** — Say a prayer each time you open your workbook, rehearse or deliver your talk. Invoke the Holy Spirit and your patron saint or another saint to guide you.
- **Mention the 2026 focus** — *Grateful Hearts Serving Others*.
- **No gift is too small** — Every gift is appreciated.
- **Mention the ACA website URL and QR code** — In addition to the case statement, the *Appeal* has a special promotional sheet that features the campaign website (aca.archstl.org) and the QR code. If any of those materials are present in the pews, you can even encourage people to give right then during your talk.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP WITH THIS IMPORTANT EFFORT!

Critical note: *Pastors with multiple parishes or worship sites will request a single guest speaker. This helps to have a unified message to all their parishioners. If you are assigned to one of these parishes, please be ready to move between all the sites to speak to all the parishioners at every Mass.*

One

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Guest Speaker,

Thank you for giving of your time and talent to participate in our Guest Speaker Program.

The Guest Speaker Program is one of the single most effective ways to reach out to St. Louis Catholics, asking for their support of the *Annual Catholic Appeal*. Your help with this program will assist the ministries fulfilling the mission of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, promoting the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thank you for accepting this important responsibility.

THERE ARE FOUR SECTIONS IN THIS MANUAL

- 1. Coordinating with the parish**
- 2. Preparing to write your talk**
- 3. Writing your talk**
- 4. Rehearsing your talk**

If you are an accomplished, experienced public speaker, you will already know many of the things in this manual. We ask you to keep in mind that we are preparing this manual for people with different levels of experience.

FOUR CRUCIAL POINTS TO CONSIDER

- 1. Be brief (5 minutes at most)**
- 2. Rehearse**
- 3. Please do not read to the congregation**
- 4. Speak loudly, clearly and from the heart**

Following these four suggestions should greatly enhance your presentation.

We hope you find this manual to be helpful in preparing your speech. Should you have any questions or need any assistance, please contact the Office of Stewardship and the Annual Catholic Appeal at (314) 792-7680.

Gratefully,



Brian Niebrugge

Executive Director

Office of Stewardship and the Annual Catholic Appeal

One

Coordinating with the Parish

Before you prepare your talk, please call the pastor at your assigned parish. He is expecting your call. When you speak with him, introduce yourself and ask the following questions.

1. I am scheduled to speak the weekend of:
2. What times are your Masses? *(For pastors with multiple parishes or worship sites, you should make sure to discuss the locations and logistics of speaking at all the sites.)*
3. Shall I help set out or clean up pew brochures?
4. How early would you like me to arrive?
5. During what part of the Mass will I speak?
6. Where will the pledge cards be available after Mass on my assigned weekend? *(Please ask for specifics.)*
7. Will the case statement or the QR Code information be available in the pews?
If so, would you like me to ask the parishioners to make a gift during my talk?
8. How is your parish most impacted by the *Appeal*? *(Your packet will have a list of any direct support the parish receives. If your assigned parish receives this support, ask the pastor about it.)*
9. How are you planning to ask parishioners to give to the *Appeal*?
10. What aspect of the *Appeal* is most touching to your parishioners?
11. Is there anything else I should know that will help with this talk?

Two

Preparing to Write Your Talk

THERE ARE FOUR BASIC SECTIONS TO YOUR TALK:

1. The Beginning

- Personal story about the program you represent

2. The Middle

- Direct and indirect impact of the *Appeal* in your assigned parish
- The overall impact of the *Appeal* on the archdiocese
- Scriptural reference

3. The “Ask”

- Ask the congregation to support the *Annual Catholic Appeal*
- Let parishioners know how they can make a pledge

4. The Ending

- Say “thank you” to the pastor and congregation

In this section of the workbook, you will gather the information you wish to include in your talk. The following worksheets are designed to help you put this information together.

Experienced presenters may have their own methods of accomplishing this, but the attached notes may still be helpful. Please use whatever method works best for you.

Two

Personal Story About the Program You Represent

- What is the most touching story you can think of in relation to your program?
- Is there someone you work with who truly inspires you?
- Write down specific stories or events that may have happened during the past year.
- What has been your biggest challenge? How was it overcome?
- What was your greatest success?
- How many people do you serve?

Two

Impact of the *Appeal* in Your Assigned Parish

Your conversation with the pastor will assist you with this section. Refer to your notes from that conversation to answer the following questions.

- Does this parish receive direct support in any way from the *Annual Catholic Appeal*?
(Your packet from the Appeal Office will also share any direct support the parish received.)

- What programs supported by the *Appeal* most impact the parishioners at this parish?
Which programs do they care most deeply about?

Below is a list of some ways parishes benefit from the *Annual Catholic Appeal* indirectly. Check one or two that you may highlight during your talk.

- Support for Catholic educational programs, including schools and PSR programs
- Support for Catholic Charities
- Support for parishioners in need
- Support for the permanent diaconate
- Support for priest healthcare and retirement
- Support for the seminary
- Support for vocation programs
- Support for Marriage Prep Programs
- Support for Youth Ministry
- Support for Pro-Life Programs
- Support for parish food pantries
- Support for rural healthcare through the Rural Parish Medical and Dental Clinics
- Support for One Classroom

THE LIST GOES ON...

Two

Impact of the *Appeal* on the Archdiocese

- Scan the list of programs below, which benefit from the *Appeal*. As you review the list, identify the programs that mean the most to you.
- For each program you select, write one or two notes about why that program is important to you, or make note of a personal story you can tell about that program.

SERVING OUR PARISHES DIRECTLY

Elementary School Assistance
Stewardship and Development Support
for Parishes, Schools and Agencies
Office of Peace and Justice
Parish Emergency Assistance Fund
Parish Food Pantries
Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis
Basilica of St. Louis, King of France

SERVING OUR YOUTH

Archdiocesan & Parochial High Schools
Archdiocesan Seminary
Special Education
Vocation Programs
Newman Centers on College Campuses
One Classroom
Religious Formation
Today and Tomorrow Educational Fund
High School Stewardship Essay Program
Office of Youth Ministry

SERVING THE PEOPLE IN OUR PARISHES

Respect Life Apostolate
Evangelization and Discipleship
Adult Faith Formation
Natural Family Planning
Hispanic Ministry
Office of Racial Harmony & Black Catholic Ministry
Catholic Deaf Ministry

SERVING THE PEOPLE IN OUR PARISHES, *continued*

Catholic Renewal Center
Catholic St. Louis Magazine
Elementary Teachers Educational Fund
St. Charles Lwanga Center

SERVING THOSE IN NEED

Catholic Charities
Affordable Housing Fund
Rural Parish Clinic
The Care Service at Sts. Joachim and Ann
Criminal Justice Ministry
Immigrant and Refugee Ministry
Bridge of Hope Lincoln County
The Wellston Center
Archbishop's Charity Fund
Meals Program at Sts. Peter & Paul Church
Messengers of Peace Mission Work

SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE US

Care for Active and Retired Priests
Regina Cleri Priests Retirement Home
Permanent Diaconate
Support for Religious Orders

OTHER

Annual Catholic Appeal Expenses
Reserve for Unpaid Pledges
Archdiocesan Services

Program 1

Program 2

Program 3

Two

Scriptural Reference

The addendum of this manual features the Scripture readings from all three *Annual Catholic Appeal* weekends, as well as reflections linking these Scripture readings to Stewardship or the *Annual Catholic Appeal*. Please find Scripture readings for the weekend you are scheduled to speak. Read the Scripture and the notes.

Use the space provided below to make your own notes, linking the Scripture from that day to the *Annual Catholic Appeal*. As you make notes, keep them simple, short and easy to read.

Three

Writing Your Talk

The next step is to organize your notes and form them into a coherent talk.

Please remember the point of your speech is not to convey the history of your program. The point is to convince the congregation that the *Annual Catholic Appeal* supports worthwhile organizations—like yours.

THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR TALK

THE BEGINNING ... THE PERSONAL STORY

(USE PART 1 OF “PREPARING TO WRITE YOUR TALK”)

- Your opening comments are the most crucial part of the whole speech. Make sure they carry impact.
- Do not begin talking about the weather, thanking the pastor for allowing you to talk or commenting on how beautiful the church may be.
- If you have a story you wish to tell about a specific person in your organization, begin by immediately telling that story.
- If you have been introduced by the celebrant, your congregation “gets it.” They know who you are, what program you represent, what your function is—there is no need to explain any of that. Jump right in with your story!

THE MIDDLE ... THE TRANSITION

(USE PARTS 2, 3 AND 4 OF “PREPARING TO WRITE YOUR TALK”)

- In this section, you will share how the *Appeal* impacts this parish, directly and indirectly. Use your notes from Part 2 of “Preparing to Write Your Talk” to write this section.
- This is where you touch on how the stories you told about your organization are happening in many programs. Tell a personal story about another program or tell of the good work you have seen other programs accomplish. Use your notes from Part 3 of “Preparing to Write Your Talk” to write this section.
- Finally, you will link the *Annual Catholic Appeal* to the day’s Scripture readings. Use your notes from Part 4 of “Preparing to Write Your Talk” to write this section.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...

Three

Writing Your Talk

THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR TALK ... THE “ASK”

- Be direct in asking the congregation to support the *Annual Catholic Appeal*. The “ask” is the reason you have graciously agreed to devote your Saturday evening and Sunday to the ACA. Please ask them to support the ACA and tell them specifically how they can do that. Remember to ask them to pray about their gift. All stewardship is closely tied to prayer.
- It is very important that the parishioners know exactly how they can make a pledge. Please be as specific as possible. For example, “Your pledge cards will be available in the St. Thomas Aquinas room just outside the main doors to the left. You may also make your gift online at aca.archstl.org.”
- Include instructions on how people can use the QR code to access online giving pages. You can even ask them to make their gift right then while you are talking.

THE ENDING ... THE “THANKS”

- Finally, please thank the pastor, the staff and, most importantly, the congregation for their time and attention. It is good to be brief.

IF YOU FOLLOW THE STEPS PROVIDED, YOUR SPEECH MAY HAVE THE FOLLOWING STRUCTURE:

- Tell a specific, powerful, heart-warming story about a particular individual.
- Tell a second story (*if time allows*).
- Share the direct and indirect impact of the *Appeal* in this parish.
- Comment about other programs impacted by the *Appeal*. Refer to the pew brochures/case statements.
- Refer to the day’s Scripture passages.
- Make the “ask.” Be specific about where they can pledge, mentioning the pledge card, the website, and the QR code when appropriate. Remember to ask them to pray about their gift.
- Say “Thank you.”

Four

Rehearsing Your Talk

Even if you have been a guest speaker for many years, it is crucial that you rehearse your speech out loud several times. As you practice your talk, do so in the same manner and with the same detail and inflection that you will use when in front of the parish. In doing so, you will likely see ways to further improve your talk. Stand up, just as you would if you were in front of the parish.

Then give your talk out loud. Be sure to time yourself. Don't whisper the speech or just review it in your mind but really deliver the whole talk, using the same mannerisms that you would use in front of the parish. Make notes as you go if you find areas that could be improved. Then make the changes and try again.

When you are done, check your time. If you spoke longer than 5 minutes, it is time to start cutting some of your words out. No matter how brilliant the talk is, if you are longer than 5 minutes, people are going to miss what you are saying. Just keep cutting until your talk is under 5 minutes.

Another suggestion is to record your talk. When you go back to listen to yourself, especially if you wait a day or two, you may be surprised at where you can improve.

It may help to give the talk to a trusted friend who is willing to give you honest feedback.

Four

Rehearsing Your Talk

Even if you are an experienced speaker, please read and use the suggestions given in this section. By giving this talk, you become the “face” of the *Appeal* for this parish. The impression that you give will impact ministries supported by the *Appeal* in this parish for years to come.

On the day of your talk, take the following steps. Make sure you arrive early enough to accomplish each task.

1. Help set out pew brochures/case statements.
2. Remember to pray before you talk.
3. Go to the location where the pledge cards are set up. Thank the volunteers. The work they are doing at that moment is helping to fund your program.

It’s effective to incorporate the names of the volunteers into your talk, if you can. By doing so, you affirm the importance of their work and highlight the commitment of specific parishioners to the *Appeal*.

This is especially effective in a smaller parish.

4. After Mass, make yourself available to greet the parishioners as they leave church. This can be one of the most rewarding aspects of this program.
5. Check in at the pledge card tables between Masses. Introduce yourself to any new volunteers and thank them.
6. After Mass, make it a point to thank the pastor and anyone else who was key in helping you that day.
7. Help gather the pew brochures/case statements.
8. As soon as you get home, sit down and write a brief, personal thank-you note to the pastor. Mail it Monday morning.

Thank you for your efforts. The Guest Speaker Program is one of the most important tools available for promoting the *Appeal*. Your gift of time and talent is helping our local Church fulfill its mission.

Addendum

Scripture Readings & Reflections

APRIL 18/19

Third Sunday of Easter

READING I

ACTS 2:14, 22-33

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed:

“You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem.
Let this be known to you, and listen to my words.

“You who are Israelites, hear these words. Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. For David says of him:

‘I saw the Lord ever before me,
with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.
Therefore my heart has been glad and my tongue has exulted;
my flesh, too, will dwell in hope,
because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld,
nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption.
You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

“My brothers, one can confidently say to you about the patriarch David that he died and was buried, and his tomb is in our midst to this day. But since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he abandoned to the netherworld nor did his flesh see corruption. God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses. Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured him forth, as you see and hear.”

Addendum

Scripture Readings & Reflections

APRIL 18/19

Third Sunday of Easter

READING II

I PETER 1:17-21

Beloved:

If you invoke as Father him who judges impartially
according to each one's works,
conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning,
realizing that you were ransomed from your futile conduct,
handed on by your ancestors,
not with perishable things like silver or gold
but with the precious blood of Christ
as of a spotless unblemished lamb.

He was known before the foundation of the world
but revealed in the final time for you,
who through him believe in God
who raised him from the dead and gave him glory,
so that your faith and hope are in God.

Addendum

Scripture Readings & Reflections

APRIL 18/19

Third Sunday of Easter

GOSPEL

LUKE 24:13-35

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?" They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over."

So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

Addendum

Scripture Readings & Reflections

APRIL 18/19

Third Sunday of Easter

REFLECTIONS

Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed!

On this Third Sunday of Easter, we are invited to open our eyes and our hearts to recognize the Risen Lord among us and to respond with grateful hearts.

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Peter boldly proclaims the Good News: Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified, has been raised up by God. He is the Christ, the awaited Messiah. Once afraid, Peter now speaks with courage and gratitude, because he has experienced firsthand the mercy and power of the Risen Christ.

In today's second reading, Peter reminds us in his letter that we were ransomed "with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pt 1:18-19). Everything we have is a gift, and we are called to live with reverence, serving others with gratitude for the love that we have received.

In the Gospel, two disciples walk the road to Emmaus with heavy hearts. Yet when they welcome a stranger and listen to His words, their hearts burn within them. In the breaking of the bread, they recognize Jesus and set out immediately to share the Good News. Gratitude moves them to action.

Like those disciples, we, too, encounter Christ in Word and Sacrament, and in one another. With *Grateful Hearts Serving Others*, we are sent forth to share His presence.

Each year, the *Annual Catholic Appeal* allows us to live out this mission together and reach out to the suffering, the doubting, and the weary throughout the Archdiocese of St. Louis. In gratitude for all God has done, we respond by serving others in His name. Our gifts become hope and healing for the most vulnerable and spread His boundless love and mercy.

Today and always, may we recognize the Risen Lord in our midst and let our grateful hearts be moved to serve. Please give to the *Appeal* <<date and place>> or visit aca.archstl.org to learn more about the impact of your generosity.

Addendum

Scripture Readings & Reflections

APRIL 25/26

Fourth Sunday of Easter

READING I

ACTS 2:14a, 36-41

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven,
raised his voice, and proclaimed:
“Let the whole house of Israel know for certain
that God has made both Lord and Christ,
this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart,
and they asked Peter and the other apostles,
“What are we to do, my brothers?”

Peter said to them,
“Repent and be baptized, every one of you,
in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;
and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

For the promise is made to you and to your children
and to all those far off,
whomever the Lord our God will call!”

He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them,
“Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

Those who accepted his message were baptized,
and about three thousand persons were added that day.

Addendum

Scripture Readings & Reflections

APRIL 25/26

Fourth Sunday of Easter

READING II

I Peter 2:20b-25

Beloved:

If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good,
this is a grace before God.

For to this you have been called,
because Christ also suffered for you,
leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps.
He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.

When he was insulted, he returned no insult;
when he suffered, he did not threaten;
instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly.
He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross,
so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness.

By his wounds you have been healed.
For you had gone astray like sheep,
but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Addendum

Scripture Readings & Reflections

APRIL 25/26

Fourth Sunday of Easter

GOSPEL

JOHN 10:1-10

Jesus said:

“Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber.

But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.

The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice.

But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.”

Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, “Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep.

All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.

A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy;

I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”

Addendum

Scripture Readings & Reflections

APRIL 25/26

Fourth Sunday of Easter

REFLECTIONS

As we continue our Easter journey, today's readings invite us to listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd and to follow Him.

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Peter's words cut to the hearts of his listeners. Moved by gratitude for the gift of salvation, they ask, "What are we to do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter calls them to repentance, baptism, and a new life in Christ. Their response, with about 3,000 baptized that day, reminds us that true gratitude leads to action.

In his letter, St. Peter encourages us to follow the example of Christ. Though He committed no sin, He bore our sins upon the cross and brought us healing. A grateful heart remembers this mercy, and, in turn, shows compassion to others.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd, the one who knows His sheep by name and leads them to abundant life. He invites us to hear His voice and to follow Him. When we live in Him, our hearts are filled with gratitude. This gratitude naturally overflows in our service of others.

Each year, the *Annual Catholic Appeal* gives us a way to follow the Good Shepherd together by supporting vital ministries that share Christ's love and accompany those most in need.

May our hearts be filled with thanksgiving for the Lord's goodness, and may that gratitude move us to serve generously in Christ's name. Please give to the *Appeal* <<date and place>> or visit aca.archstl.org to learn more about the impact of your generosity.

Addendum

Scripture Readings & Reflections

MAY 2/3

Fifth Sunday of Easter

READING I

ACTS 6:1-7

As the number of disciples continued to grow,
the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews
because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.
So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said,
“It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table.
Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men,
filled with the Spirit and wisdom,
whom we shall appoint to this task,
whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer
and to the ministry of the word.”

The proposal was acceptable to the whole community,
so they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit,
also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas,
and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

They presented these men to the apostles
who prayed and laid hands on them.

The word of God continued to spread,
and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly;
even a large group of priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Addendum

Scripture Readings & Reflections

MAY 2/3

Fifth Sunday of Easter

READING II

I PETER 2:4-9

Beloved:

Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings
but chosen and precious in the sight of God,
and, like living stones,

let yourselves be built into a spiritual house
to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices
acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For it says in Scripture:

*Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion,
a cornerstone, chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in it shall not be put to shame.*

Therefore, its value is for you who have faith, but for those without faith:

*The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone, and
a stone that will make people stumble,
and a rock that will make them fall.*

They stumble by disobeying the word, as is their destiny.

You are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood,
a holy nation, a people of his own,
so that you may announce the praises” of him
who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Addendum

Scripture Readings & Reflections

MAY 2/3

Fifth Sunday of Easter

GOSPEL

JOHN 14:1-12

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me.

In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places.

If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way.”

Thomas said to him, “Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?”

Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father.

From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.”

Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own.

The Father who dwells in me is doing his works.

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves.

Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father.”

Addendum

Scripture Readings & Reflections

MAY 2/3

Fifth Sunday of Easter

REFLECTIONS

The Easter season continues to fill our hearts with joy and gratitude for all that the Lord has done for us in Christ. Today's readings once again remind us that true gratitude overflows in love and service of others.

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, the early Church faces the challenge of caring for a growing community. The apostles, grateful for God's call, appoint deacons to serve those in need so that the mission of proclaiming the Word can continue. From the beginning, gratitude and service have gone hand in hand in the life of the Church.

In his letter, St. Peter reminds us that we are "living stones" and asks us to let ourselves "be built into a spiritual house" (1 Pt 2:5). Each of us is "chosen and precious in the sight of God" (1 Pt 2:4) and has a part to play in building up the Body of Christ.

In the Gospel, as Jesus prepares to return to the Father, He promises that His followers will continue His work: "Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these" (Jn 14:12). Gratitude for Christ's saving love compels us to serve as His hands and heart in the world.

The *Annual Catholic Appeal* gives us a way to live out this calling. Through our shared generosity, we serve one another in faith, hope, and love through life-giving ministries and programs. Grateful hearts working together make Christ's presence known to those most in need.

Today, let us renew our trust in the Lord, who is our way, our truth, and our life. With grateful hearts, may we serve others with gladness and help build up His Church. Please give to the *Appeal* <<date and place>> or visit aca.archstl.org to learn more about the impact of your generosity.

*“Fix your whole heart upon God
and love him with all your strength.”*

— St. Louis IX, King of France —



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