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Throughout the Bible, God declares the need to help and care for our neighbor as we would ourselves, so St. Peter asks each individual to ponder the following thought: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (Peter 4:10). In other words, God is calling us to respond to the need to give back to others, which also describes the central purpose of the Annual Catholic Appeal. The Annual Catholic appeal challenges the fortunate members of the Archdiocese of St. Louis to answer this call of serving our neighbors with the talents and fortune we have been given. As people who have been blessed with so much, it is important that we recognize this and turn around to give it back to our communities.

One might then ask, "Where do I begin, and why is it important to participate in spreading God's message?" Starting with strengthening our individual faith, we can next look beyond our selfish needs to the more dire needs of our communities. Participating in the Annual Catholic Appeal helps accomplish the central goal of aiding these necessities, and it is important to respond to God's hopes and wishes for all of His people. When God granted more talents and wealth to some than others, He intended for the more fortunate to use their positions to serve those with less. I believe that God allows for certain individuals to enjoy more blessings because He has faith in our ability to spread His love and compassion by returning our gifts back to those with less. In the end, we have the free will to make decisions in how to respond to God's call.

However, with a strong individual faith and an openness to serve others, we can make positive impacts on our communities by answering passionately. Unquestionably, all of the Catholics in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, including myself, should therefore seek to support this mission because it is God's desire for those of us with many blessings to volunteer and support.

What does it mean to help and tend to others? I define the act of caring for God's creation and people as stewardship. Stewardship does not just involve the deed of giving back to others, but it also includes making efforts with kindness and God's grace. Just like mother Mary raised and cared for Jesus, along with the rest of her community, these acts of gentleness can be additionally applied to various aspects of my life. I have been blessed to be a part of a very charitable school in which service and strong relationships are infectious to all those who are a part of our sisterhood. As a St. Joseph's Academy angel, I am called to embody the likeness of an angel, a figure who helps those in need. It is through the principles of the Sisters of St. Joseph that I have learned what it means to truly take an active part in my community. In my case, I arrive to school an hour before class actually begins three days a week to take part in an instrumental group, allowing me to share my gift of music with others. Stewardship does not only include sharing materials and wealth with others, but it is also equally important to extend talents and blessings. In addition, I am able to give to others through my service throughout the St. Joseph's Academy community, including working at events for young kids, giving tours at open houses, welcoming incoming freshman through various events, and participating in the school motto of "Not I, But We." Likewise, I belong to the organizations of Respect Life Club and Action in Africa, which both focus on protecting and promoting healthy and safe lives. Finally, I practice stewardship by volunteering my time to tutor and help struggling students. As

a result of these various activities, I have the opportunity to share my spirit, compassion, and faith with all those I encounter, reflecting the ideals of Mary and God.

The acts of stewardship and giving back are further promoted by the Annual Catholic Appeal because they give members of the Church an additional opportunity to enact God's will into their fortunate situations. By participating in the Annual Catholic Appeal, one further participates in caring for the poor, promoting vocations for the priesthood, religious life, and marriage, providing for the homeless, helping strangers and those in need, and educating the young in their faith. All of these wonderful acts are accomplished by the Archdiocese through these funds, and they make life-changing impacts on the communities throughout St. Louis. God has called each one of His disciples to recognize their gifts, look to how they can share those gifts, and then, implement His words into the lives of others. The Archdiocese does just that through its many parishes and virtuous members, leaving an immense impression of God's grace and mercy by touching the hearts of all.

The Annual Catholic Appeal brings the Archdiocese of St. Louis together by promoting the need to help our communities through stewardship and by following God's will. God believes and counts on those of us with the ability to raise others up, and He expects that we respond to His call like Mary did. By living a life that includes service and charity, one's heart can only flourish in stronger faith and greater compassion. It does not matter what position or ability one has because all ages and Catholics can participate in some way. The Annual Catholic Appeal unites the Archdiocese through the cause of supporting our communities, and we must follow this call by raising each other up into the light of God's grace.