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FROM THE DESK OF CARDINAL DOLAN

August 18, 2019

A week – or – so ago, we priests, deacons, religious women and men - - and a growing number of lay faithful - - who daily pray what the Church calls The Divine Office meditated on St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. There St. Paul is asking for money! Yes, a collection! It goes back that far!

The apostle is deeply concerned about the mother church in Jerusalem, suffering persecution and hardship, and he summons the rest of the church to assist. He is thanking the Corinthians for their generosity.

Then he observes, "There is one thing I wish to avoid, namely, any blame over my handling of the generous collection."

The Bible reminds us that we, like St. Paul, who have stewardship over the treasure God's people give to the Church, must administer it wisely, openly, and shrewdly, eager to give an accounting of it. God forbid we should give scandal by recklessly, foolishly, or improperly handling the money God's people donate.

I'm afraid that happens. We're aware of the disturbing news of bishops, pastors, or people in the Church who keep track of donations, squandering, stealing, or wasting it. St. Paul would cringe! That's a sin; that's a scandal; that's an injustice.

That's why when I arrived as your archbishop over a decade ago I asked Bill Whiston, our seasoned chief financial officer, and his skilled office to provide an annual report to you of the archdiocesan finances; the most recent was published in the previous issue of Catholic New York. That's why our archdiocesan finances undergo an annual audit by a respected outside firm; that's why I depend on the wise counsel of a top-notch Archdiocesan Finance Council (please see the financial report for a complete list of Finance Council members), with working committees on audit, investment, and building and properties; that's why I cannot sell any assets of the archdiocese without review by the finance council, college of consulters, and priests council. I want to assure you that we have effective vigilance, transparency, checks and balances in place.

Like St. Paul, I thank you for your generosity. Bettina Alonso and her splendid Office of Development tell me that last year's Cardinal's Appeal once again went over goal, and that the 2019 progress on target. She also reports that our 3 Renew and Rebuild Capital Campaign is reaching \$250

Million in pledges, which is 25% over the goal! As you know, 74% of that campaign stays in our parishes, with the remaining funds helping to support important services like our seminary, a residence for our retired priests, and Catholic schools.

Monsignor Kevin Sullivan, executor director of Catholic Charities, beams at the goodness of his benefactors, as does Susan George over the generosity of the devoted supporters of our Inner City Catholic Schools Scholarship Fund.

This gratitude I express is even more fervent now as the archdiocese and the Church continue to reel from the abuse scandals. Our first priority in responding to this crisis must be care and concern for the victim-survivors of abuse. We have learned, especially through our acclaimed Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program, that what victim-survivors most desire is a recognition on the part of the Church of the harm that they have endured, an important step towards a sense of healing and justice. They tell us that receiving compensation is a tangible sign of the Church's sorrow and desire for reparation.

At the same time, however, the financial impact on the Church in America is towering, with dioceses and religious orders here in the United States spending over \$4 billion in compensation to victims and attorney fees! Here in the state of New York, our expenses will only go higher as we face the yearlong "window" in the statute of limitations, which began on August 14.

Like St. Paul, I must try to balance the legitimate and just settlements to those terribly abused, and my sacred duties to exercise proper responsibility to see that the gifts you all donated for Church purposes - - parishes, charity, education, healthcare, and evangelization - - are only used for that. I have assured you that the gifts you give for sacred purposes, as mentioned earlier, have not been touched for the expenses of the abuse crisis, and I am committed to doing all that I can to keep that assurance. Of course, it is impossible to predict today how many lawsuits will be filed, and what impact that will have on the future finances of the archdiocese. I'll try my best to keep you posted.

But the obvious question: where then, has the money been coming from to pay these huge outlays? As I mentioned to you three years ago, when we began the effective Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program, our archdiocesan family did what most families do in an emergency: we took a loan! As of July 23, 2019, we have paid \$66,072,984 to 335 victims, as well as \$6,966,100 in the expenses of the program and other attorneys' fees. I would foresee those costs continuing in the year of the "look back."

Well, while I have been told by many that it's consoling to know that none of your money donated for the mission, message, and ministry of Jesus and His Church has been tapped for payments, someone has to pay off that loan! Where's that coming from?

When all is said and done, this archdiocese doesn't have a dime that has not come from the generosity of our people. What we're using for these extraordinary expenses are the proceeds from leases on otherwise unused property. I've shared with you before my high appreciation for the sound fiscal administration of my predecessors. We're able for now to sustain the expenses due to their wisdom in the past. In the future days, we are counting upon the insurance coverage my predecessors and their financial teams arranged to help in the compensation.

Critics – and there are some – have already written to tell me that they are "no longer donating to the archdiocese because their money is being used to pay victims and lawyers." I do try to reply politely with the facts I've just shared with you that this is not the case. (By the way, when we do research, most of these critics have never been generous supporters in the past anyway!)

The overwhelming majority of you tell me you want to stand by the Church you love in this time of crisis, notwithstanding your justifiable anger, frustration, and sadness, and that you realize the good done by the mission, message, and ministries of Jesus and His Church are more essential than ever, if the reform and renewal we all long for is to continue.

Thus do I repeat my thanks, and promise that I'll keep you posted. It's not my Church but the Lord's; it's not my money but yours, God's faithful people!