

## Fund Raising at Saint Thomas Parish and School

Often the first place people think of holding a fund raising effort is at church or school. The reasoning is simple: a Church or a school is a body of people who are likely to be sympathetic and are conveniently located in one place. What is usually overlooked is the fact that the people who attend church or go to the same school are going primarily to worship, connect with others, and to learn. Some appeals make sense if they support the mission of the Church or the school or if they provide an opportunity for almsgiving, which is a part of the life of a Church. We value the good will that seeks to financially aid our parish and school or that wants to financially support a worthy cause. The questions are: **Which ones, How many, and How often?** If people are constantly or indiscriminately approached to give or buy something, they may soon feel harassed and choose to go to a church or school where they can worship and learn in peace. A second question is **how will people be approached?** The one place people in a Church or school would hope to be free of fund soliciting that “is in their face” or “publically puts them on the spot” is at church or school. Some families are of limited means, and they may feel shamed or humiliated to have to say no if they cannot afford to participate. This is why a church or faith community needs to establish guidelines to preserve right order and good will.

### Guidelines

1. A fund raising application form must be completed and submitted to the Coordinator of Finance for review and approval by the Parish Finance Council at least one month **in advance of any publicity** for a proposed event.

This gives the Finance Council time to carefully consider if the request falls in line with the mission of the church or school and how many other solicitations for funds are scheduled to take place at the same time. It also permits the Finance Council to set parameters for the fund raising effort given circumstances current in the parish or school. Another reason for sufficient time to consider the proposal has to do with the fact that people do not like abrupt decisions. They like to know where a proposal is coming from, namely, who proposed it, what its purpose is, and how it will be carried out. They like to have time to digest the fact that it is coming.

2. All publicity (bulletin articles, flyers, lector announcements, etc.) for an approved fund raising must be given to the Parish Office for review and approval by the pastor and the parish staff at least two weeks prior to the event.

Things can be worded in an informative and inviting way. They can also be worded in a confronting, moralizing or otherwise insensitive way. At our staff meetings we discuss how the message will be perceived and received by the various age and ministry groups we serve in our community of faith. We want it well and invitingly received.

3. If flyers are to be stuffed in the bulletin, the group hosting the approved fund-raiser will provide volunteers to do the stuffing.

We do not have the paid office staff to carry out this task. The reason we do not is with a view to keeping our parish and school administrative costs as low as possible.

4. Applications for licenses and permits connected with a fund raising (i.e., raffle licenses, liquor permits, etc.) must be submitted for review and approval by the appropriate government agency in advance of the event's announcement. This may mean months in advance depending on the license or permit being sought.

5. If the fund raising event is to be a parish sponsored activity, the accounting for the fund raising activity must flow through Saint Thomas' bank account. A copy of the budget listing all sources of revenue and a breakdown of expenses should be submitted with the fund raising application.

We are committed to complying with the law and the financial policies of the Diocese of Grand Rapids. We are also committed to accountability and total transparency in terms of money collected, money disbursed in the name of the parish, and a complete, publically accessible report.

6. If the fund raising activity is not for the benefit of Saint Thomas Parish or School, but our church or school population is to be approached, good internal controls must still be in place to ensure that the funds raised are safeguarded from misappropriation. Also, if the organization that benefits from the fund-raiser is not a 501(c)(3) organization, this must be clearly advertised so that donors are aware that their contributions are not tax deductible. If the organization is a 501(c)(3) organization, it must take on the responsibility for providing the appropriate tax receipt for donations in which no goods or services were rendered. In either case a complete accounting of funds collected, used and distributed must be available for view.

When it comes to money, the field is wide open to misunderstanding, rumor and accusation. This damages people's trust and good will. Good internal controls and a pledge of total transparency go a long way to preserving trust and good will.

7. Faith & Friendship groups active in the parish and school (e.g., Kononia, Regnum Christi, Knights of Columbus) are autonomous organizations that use our facilities for their meetings. They enrich our parish life and we greatly value them. However, they are not funded by the Parish, and they are not under the direction of a Parish or School staff member. These groups must request prior approval to conduct low-key fund raising activities by completing a fund raising application and submitting it to the Finance Council at least one month prior to the date they propose to begin advertising their event.

Usually these fund raising efforts consist of:

- Placing an article in the Bulletin.
- Setting up a table in the lower level of Church or on the lawn outside of the church to sell items or register people for an event.

It is assumed that these fund raising activities will NOT entail:

- Making announcements at Mass or placing flyers in the Parish Bulletin.

*(An exception may be requested, but approval by the pastor in consultation with the parish staff is needed.)*

In certain seasons, the parish office receives a great deal of requests for information to be included in the weekend announcements after Mass and as flyers in the parish bulletin. These need to be limited to a reasonable number in order to preserve the character of the Mass and the capacity of the bulletin.

It is NEVER permitted to:

- Directly approach people after Mass to make a purchase or participate in a fund raising activity
- Solicit close to the entrances or exits of church

8. Saint Thomas gets dozens of requests each year from individuals who want to raise money for personal study or mission outreach. As we are not able to accommodate them all, in fairness we do not feel we can choose one over another.