

Noah's Buddies

■ FR. JOSEPH M. CHAMPLIN

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A dozen or more years ago, two young Amen, both college graduates and regular Sunday Mass goers, heard at separate parishes around the same time some lay persons describe a specific form of stewardship termed sacrificial giving.

The words touched their hearts and each one, beginning the next weekend, increased their weekly contributions from one dollar to twenty-five dollars. They later commented: "No one ever taught us about this, about how much we should give to church and charity."

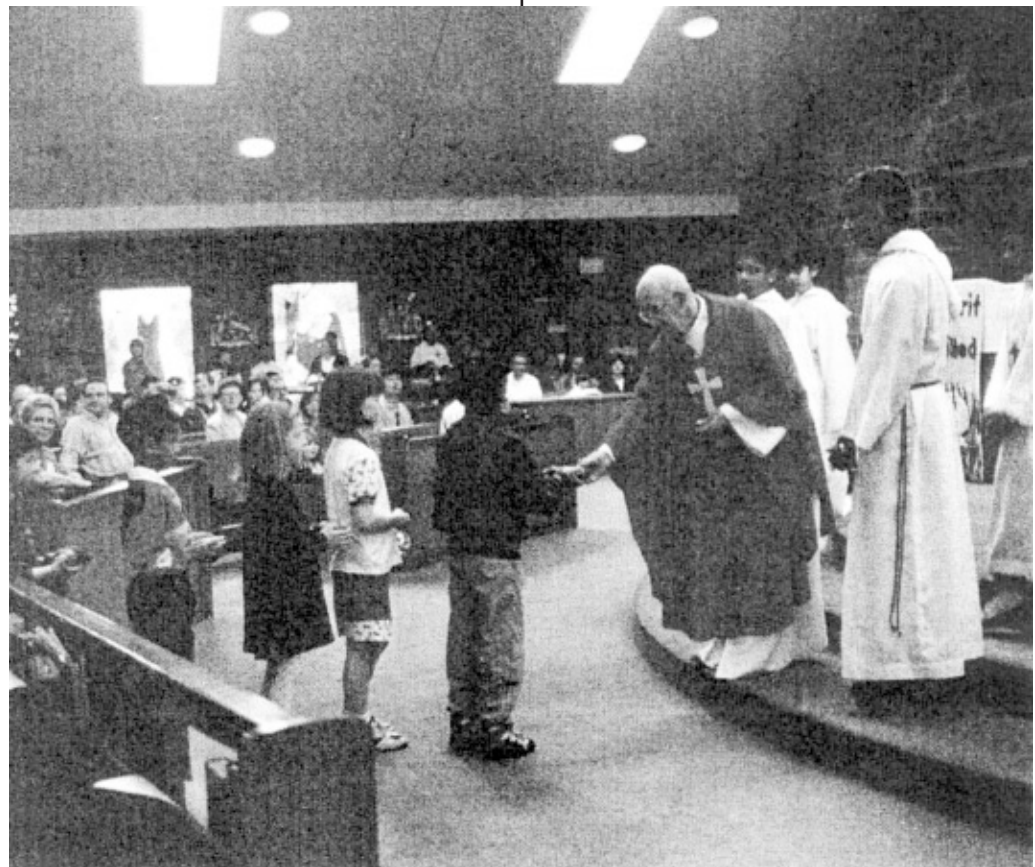
Two parents had similar experiences. Both of these professional persons - one a surgeon, the other a general contractor - listened during a parish council meeting to the presentation of a proposed sacrificial giving process for their church. Afterwards, these men reached the same conclusion: "As children, we had a box of envelopes for the collection at Mass. As parents, for some reason, we never provided these for our kids. Now we realize this was a mistake."

Some pastors, to rectify that condition, have reintroduced those types of children's envelopes, but in a more thorough manner.

Each envelope provides spaces to write in the youngster's donation of treasure (money offering), time (service to others) and talent (exercise of a particular gift). They thus learn at an early age that God expects them to share a part of all they have, do and are with others, especially those in need.

The pastor suggests that parents inspire their children by example: show them how to give a portion or percentage of their income from allowance or employment, and instruct them to use the envelope, even if there is no treasure that week for enclosure.

I have over the last two decades imple-



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mented this procedure in several parishes with these newer type of envelopes. The response has been encouraging. However, in the most recent past at our Cathedral, participation by the boys and girls had shrunk to nearly zero.

A new and creative format, "Noah's Buddies," has substantially rejuvenated involvement (Cathedral Corporation, Rome, New York, 800-698-0299). We moved from one or a few returns with total offerings of perhaps two dollars, to as many as twenty-two envelopes with a total of \$31.75.

Those numbers may seem insignificant and miniscule, but our parish community is a center-city church with few children and only fifty-three in the religious education program.

Each envelope of the packet has a different religious symbol presented on one side. "Beehive," "Good Shepherd," "Shamrock" and "St. Francis" are examples. Another, "The Hand of God," carries the following explanation: "This is a symbol of God as creator and protector. The image of God's hand is found in the creation story and in the psalms. It reminds us of the way God gently guides us, guards us, blesses us and

supplies all our needs."

On the reverse side, the envelope reads: "I'm one of Noah's Buddies. I have shared

- My time
- My talent
- My treasure

and there is space for the child's name.

We have taken a large basket, labeled it "Noah's Buddies" and place it before the altar. At Mass the children approach the sanctuary and drop their envelope into that container prior to the regular collection. This mini and disorganized procession invariably brings approving smiles and occasional chuckles from the adults.

A section in the bulletin under "Noah's Buddies" reports on the previous week's results and reproduces some of those time and talent offerings. "I dusted for grandma." "Hung up coats for guests." "I played carols for my family on Thanksgiving." "I love to sing for grandma and poppy." "Gave up my toy for my brother."

As adults, these children, we trust, will never complain that no one trained them to give to church, charity and others. ■