

What is the Matthew 25 Program?

In 1973, the community of St. John Student Parish chose to begin to contribute 5% of the weekly collection to groups that serve dire human survival needs. According to the October 7, 1973 parish bulletin, this was to be “off the top” of the collection and was meant to be **“the sign and expression for all of us that, both individually and as a Parish, we are not tuned in on ourselves but are concerned first and foremost with an effective witness to the needs of our brothers and sisters.”** The program, which became known as the 5% Disbursal Program, provided a unique opportunity for the parish community to celebrate its abundant blessings, to be joined both in prayer and in material ways with suffering people around the world, to grow in God’s love through Christ, and to promote justice.

“Whatever you do for the least of my people, you do for me.”

-Matthew 25:40

After the merger of St. John Student Parish with St. Thomas Aquinas, the program continued. **The name was changed to the Matthew 25 Program to emphasize the foundation in Christ’s reminder that, when we serve the poor, we serve Him.** The program is overseen by the Matthew 25 Committee, which is under the authority of the Parish Financial Council. The committee is composed of several parishioners, some of whom have been members for many years, and others who were appointed by Father Mark following the merger of the two parishes. In general, each week, the Matthew 25 recipient receives 5% of the total offertory collection at both parish sites. The goal of the program continues to be the sharing of parish contributions with groups around the world that serve dire human survival needs. **Recipients of funds are generally alternated on a week-by-week basis between Western Hemisphere groups (North and South America) and Eastern Hemisphere groups (generally Asia, Africa, and Europe).** The committee meets three times a year to discuss proposals and to choose upcoming recipients.

The criterion that groups serve dire human survival needs is seriously considered and applied by the committee. Examples of groups that serve such needs are those that provide food, water, healthcare, and emergency shelter to the poor. Recent recipients have included groups that provide homes and vital services for orphaned and abandoned children in Peru, Romania, India, and Zambia; health care services in Lansing, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mexico, Bolivia, and Tanzania; shelter and other vital services for homeless people in Lansing and Washington D.C.; emergency food in Haiti, the West Bank, Detroit, and Lansing; and care for terminally ill persons in our community.

Parishioners are welcomed and encouraged to propose groups for Matthew 25 funding. Proposal forms are available in the parish offices and at elcatholics.org under the Service and Outreach tab.

-Parish Bulletin, *Connections*, 21 December 2014