

2018 showed the light is stronger than darkness

written by Bishop Anthony B. Taylor |

Bishop Anthony B. Taylor delivered this recorded homily Feb. 2-3 for the CASA kickoff.

This weekend began Saturday morning with the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, also known as Candlemas Day since many parishes bless candles on this feast.

If everyone participates, we will affect lives for many years to come.

Feb. 2 was chosen for this feast because the holy family's presentation of the baby Jesus in the Temple would have occurred 40 days after the birth of Jesus, the day that divine light began to shine in the darkness of a very dark world, hence the blessing of candles.

And isn't it true that this last year we have experienced several disturbing chapters of this ongoing struggle between the light and the darkness? But as we proclaim on Christmas and see every Easter, the light of Christ is stronger than any darkness we will ever have to face.

Most of you know from previous years that my message to you this time of year is about our annual CASA — Catholic Arkansas Sharing Appeal.

As you know, our diocese and the Church at large have been going through our own stretch of darkness this last year, and there are wounds we want to help heal, darkness we want to help lift, wrongs we want to help set right.

Because the question is no doubt on some of your minds, I need to start by making it clear that no money that you give to CASA is used to provide assistance to those victims we're helping here in Arkansas. That financial support comes from other diocesan sources, not from CASA.

The overall expenses of the diocese are covered by proceeds from investments, from an assessment paid by every parish and mission (in effect a diocesan tax), from insurance claims, from bequests of various sorts and so on — multiple sources of income.

CASA funds are used for the purposes listed on your pledge envelope. Most of it funds the ongoing operations of the diocese — for instance, all the offices that provide services that exceed what most parishes are able to provide on the local level: vocations, Catholic charities, our faith formation programs, Catholic schools, Hispanic ministry, our deacon formation program, our tribunal, our pro-life activities and many others.

We ordained eight new priests in 2018, six the year before that and two more this year — 16 new priests in the last three years. The light is stronger than the darkness.

We presently have around 60 men from all around the state in formation to become deacons, which will soon double the number of permanent deacons we have in active ministry. The light is stronger than the darkness.

Fletcher Hall has now been remodeled, partly with CASA money, and is now in full operation, hosting retreats and other activities that serve to build up the faith. Here also the light is stronger than the darkness. And I could give more examples.

A fuller description of many of the ways your CASA donations are used to build up the Church in Arkansas can be found in this week's issue of the Arkansas Catholic. If you are not yet a subscriber, please sign up. Subscription envelopes are being provided to you along with your CASA pledge card to be filled out during this Mass.

In our diocese we ask that you give 1 percent of your gross income to CASA. For instance, if you earn \$50,000 per year, pledge to give \$50 per month for the next 10 months and that is 1 percent.

If everyone participates, we will affect lives for many years to come. Thank you for your generosity in the past and thanks in advance for an even more generous response this year.

This is one way in which you can be a light shining in the darkness here in Arkansas today. Please join me in making not only CASA but indeed this entire year a shared blessing for everyone.