

Encouraging Memorial Gifts

Anyone who has ever read the obituaries knows the line well, *“In lieu of flowers, the family encourages charitable donations to _____.”* This type of solicitation is known as a “Memorial Gift.” Memorial gifts honor a loved one or pay tribute to the values of the deceased person.



Wise charities make it easy for families to encourage Memorial Gifts, as this type of giving can yield significant contributions. Memorial giving spreads the influence of the charities receiving the gifts. Our Parishes especially should encourage Memorial Gifts, given the lifelong importance of the Parish to so many of our members.

How can Parishes encourage Memorial Gifts?

- Be more explicit about our interest to receive such gifts. Many charitable organizations actively solicit Memorial Gifts from families whose loved ones are ill or in their last days. The Church should be more discrete, but a regular bulletin announcement that encourages families to think of the Parish as an object of Memorial Gifts is certainly appropriate. Try preparing tasteful envelopes in which donations can be sent to the parish with a Memorial Gift inside.
- Show more gracious stewardship for lifetime giving. The Parish that actively thanks its consistent donors is more likely to be remembered by relatives and friends when it comes time to give a Memorial Gift.
- Communicate regularly and often about our ministries and programs. Sending annual reports, making our programs come alive in frequent updates through the bulletin, testimonials, or by other means will pay dividends in more Memorial Gifts. Families will know better what the Parish is doing and be more likely to remember it.

In summary, *Memorial Gifts flow to Parishes that steward donors well all the time.* Rather than lament that the hospital of last illness, large national “disease organization,” or the helpers who only saw the long-time parishioner in the last couple of months received the Memorial Gift, we have to redouble our efforts to be good stewards. If we do, we will likely receive more Memorial Gifts.