Dear Benefactors,

It is no secret that Nevada is vast. What may come as a surprise is the extent of territory the Diocese of Reno covers to meet the spiritual needs of Nevadans living in remote areas. With more than 70,000 square miles and 12 counties to cover, the Diocese of Reno truly is a “Mission” Diocese. But what does this mean in a practical sense?

It means that our rural priests literally “Ride the Range,” sometimes 100-200 miles to celebrate Mass in the farthest corners of Nevada. Challenging as it may be, these priests realize it is their job to remind people that God is with them…no matter where they live.

The town of Empire is rural in every sense of the word—with nothing there but land and blue sky. The people are super-friendly, and they treat each other as family. Average church attendance is 9-12 people and on holidays 25-35. Despite the 145 mile roundtrip, our priest, Father Justin Lazar wishes he could be there more to and help with emergencies. Inclement weather could result in a one-to three-month delay before he is able to see them at Mass again. In the meantime, he talks to them by phone.

Deacon Kurt Carlson, who is stationed at St. Patrick’s in Fallon, not only serves the people of Fallon but also steps in when priests are unable to cover their Masses. But it is a little like coming home for him since he practiced medicine in Battle Mountain, Lovelock, Fallon, Yerington, and Hawthorne earlier in life.

“When I return to these communities, it’s as if I never left,” he says. “These are people whose babies I delivered, and it’s great to see them again. When I get a call from the ruralists, I always wonder… do I bring my stethoscope or a cross?” he says with a chuckle.

Deacon Kurt compares our diocese to those of South America, where priests travel throughout the country. Father Jesus Ballesteros starts out his weekend by traveling from Yerington to Hawthorne (58 miles) to preside over their ‘Sunday’ Mass, which is actually held at 9 am Saturday morning. He then goes to Smith Valley (82 miles) for a 4 pm vigil followed by a trip back to Yerington (24 miles) for a 5 pm vigil. He awakes on Sunday morning and says two more Masses in Yerington. These same priests still need to keep up on regular weekly work…weddings, funerals, baptisms, meetings, and ministering to prisoners.
And while the cities and towns throughout Nevada may differ in size, socioeconomics or industry, I believe we are all very much alike. No matter where you are, people are people. They struggle with the same things. Take St. John the Baptist parish in Lovelock as an example: Most of the parishioners have been attending Mass at St. John the Baptist their entire lives. The parish was established in 1900 with the first Mass being celebrated in 1901. These families have always had a priest to take care of their needs.

The priests from St. Joseph’s parish in Elko, are responsible to cover a very large area of northeastern Nevada, which includes three additional parishes: Sacred Heart in Carlin, St. Thomas Aquinas in Wells, St. Brendan in Eureka, the Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission in Jackpot, Nevada, and Our Lady of the Rubies Chapel in Springcreek. Without these priests, many people would not hear the word of God. Children would not be baptized, and their loved ones would miss out on all our Church offers.

It is important to ponder the difficulty facing Catholic families who live five hours away from the city. Finding another priest for sacraments is not as simple as going to a neighboring parish.

The bottom line is that we have a symbolic relationship...one community united in faith. Whether there are five or 10 people at Mass, as in the case of St. Augustine Station in Austin, or more than 1,000 attending a large Reno parish, we are one. We need to remember that “Jesus cares for the one sheep he found.”

We depend on each other in this diocese. With the leadership of the Holy Spirit, we can be mindful that we all need to work where we are and always seek God’s guidance. In the words of St. Matthew... “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.”

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Randolph R. Calvo
Bishop of Reno

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**MASS STIPENDS**

Through Mass Stipends, a voluntary offering, the donor seeks spiritual benefits that God may bestow upon the persons or concerns that are specially held in prayer at the Mass. Mass stipends are a means of providing support to our mission priests and parishes. The Ecclesiastical Province of San Francisco, of which we are a part, recommends the following:

- A $5.00 stipend for Mass to be celebrated at a time left to the discretion of the priest.
- A $10.00 stipend for a Mass to be celebrated on a specific date.

We will, however, continue to accept and distribute mass stipends in lesser amounts.