



Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Toledo

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**Letter to the Faithful Announcing Steps
to Begin to Address Financial Challenges**

22 February 2016

Dear Friends in Christ,

In my “Letter to the Faithful” dated November 21, 2015, I wrote that we would periodically update you on the financial and organizational affairs of the Diocese of Toledo. Today, I write to you to report on our progress and the next steps in our financial plan to discontinue the practice of deficit spending and better steward the assets of our Diocese.

Last month, we released the General Fund financial report for the period July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. This financial report provided more information and transparency than in the past, and it presented the challenges we are facing from a history of deficit spending by using our savings to cover expenses. At the same time, we understood we would be incurring a significant operating loss for the current fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, and thereafter, if changes were not made. In fact, we have determined, if we do nothing, that we are facing a \$1.3 million budget shortfall at the administrative offices of the Diocese for the upcoming 2017 fiscal year (July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017). That is simply not acceptable. As a result, I am announcing the following decisions to begin to address our financial challenges at the Pastoral Center.

20% Reduction in Pastoral Center Expenses

In my November letter, I wrote that you could expect a variety of changes, including the implementation of a financial plan to stop deficit spending. I also wrote that we would start with the administrative offices of the Diocese, because positive developments at the Pastoral Center and its ministries/programs will better serve our parishes.

To that end, we are implementing a 20% reduction in expenses at the administrative offices of the Diocese. We are reducing our costs in a strategic and deliberate way so as to limit disruption to the services and programming we provide to the parishes and the faithful of northwest Ohio. However, there will be some adjustments and changes required to implement these significant cuts.

Just as a family must develop a budget to live by and must curb its spending habits and cut back its expenses at times, I, as the father of this family of faith, must develop a financial plan that no longer allows us to spend money we do not have. Moving forward, we must abide by that plan. This 20% reduction in expenses is part of that plan and evidences my commitment to the highest standards of accountability and fiscal integrity.

We must be committed to cease our practice of deficit spending. These cost reductions will take us one step closer to reaching that goal and getting our financial house in order so that you can be assured that the Diocese is stewarding your resources in a responsible and careful way.

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Catholic Chronicle

In addition, the Catholic Chronicle newspaper and website will cease its operations, effective February 26, 2016. Unfortunately, we were informed that the printer of the newspaper recently decided to downsize and not to retain the Catholic Chronicle as a client after printing the February 2016 issue. Simply put, the newspaper is no longer financially sustainable. It has been operating at a deficit for years, and the deficit continues to grow, including an estimated loss of nearly \$300,000 for the current fiscal year ending June 30, 2016. Accordingly, and in an effort to reduce our budget shortfall and only spend what we have, the Catholic Chronicle will no longer be issued in print or online. Sadly, some of our employees will be affected by these changes, and as we know such changes are never easy.

The Catholic Chronicle, founded in 1934, has been through multiple iterations over time, downsizing from a weekly to a biweekly to a bimonthly to the present 20-to-28 page newspaper printed 11 times per year. The Catholic Chronicle currently has a subscriber list of less than 1,000 households and its website had fewer than 27,000 page views over the last three months. By comparison, the Diocese of Toledo website, www.toledodiocese.org, had nearly 30,000 unique visitors and 168,000 page views over the same time span. Our diocesan website together with our diocesan social media has already been for some time the primary medium for sharing news with the Diocese.

Televised Sunday Catholic Mass

Also, the televised Sunday Catholic Mass will be discontinued, effective April 2016. The Sunday Catholic Mass is produced by the Diocese of Toledo in concert with a Toledo video production company and airs weekly on WTOL-TV at an annual expense of nearly \$100,000.

More than 30 years ago, the Diocese began producing at no cost a televised Sunday Mass at a time when a televised Mass was not otherwise available. Today, there are several options for a video or audio broadcast of a Sunday Catholic Mass that have become available over the last several years.

All or part of 10 of the 19 counties that comprise the Diocese do not receive WTOL-TV in their homes and therefore have never benefited from our televised Sunday Mass. In addition, the average number of viewers is fewer than 7,500.

Simply put, it is not financially or practically feasible to continue to produce the televised Sunday Catholic Mass. Sadly, there will be some regular viewers who will miss the Diocese of Toledo's televised Sunday Mass. As a pastoral response, we will develop a plan to assist our parishes in outreach to those who otherwise may not have access to Sunday Mass.

Consultation

As part of a recent diocesan-wide survey to assist in the strategic planning for the Department of Communications, more than 200 priests, deacons, consecrated religious and lay faithful in all 15 deaneries of the Diocese responded to questions regarding the Catholic Chronicle and the televised Sunday Catholic Mass. Respondents cited low readership of the Catholic Chronicle in print and online, as well as lamenting the fact that hundreds of copies of the newspaper delivered to parishes each month are routinely discarded. Many respondents also stated that the Diocese's televised Sunday Catholic Mass is not available in their area. Others said very few parishioners view the televised Sunday Mass, while still others highlighted that a video or audio broadcast of the Sunday Mass is readily available in multiple other media.

Further, I engaged in broad consultation regarding the Catholic Chronicle and the televised Sunday Catholic Mass with the Senior Staff, Diocesan Finance Council, Diocesan Pastoral Council, College of Consultors, the Deans and the Presbyteral Council.

Moving forward

While the measures outlined above are essential at the moment, these are the first steps in an ongoing process to cut costs in order to reduce the estimated \$1.3 million budget shortfall at the Pastoral Center for the next fiscal year, and to continue to study and address the financial challenges we face as a Diocese.

As the father of this family of faith, it is my sacred duty to be a faithful steward of the household entrusted to me (*Titus 1:7-9*). At the same time, I am depending on your prayerful support, perseverance and generosity as we work transparently, responsibly and diligently toward the best interests of all members of the Diocese. We do this not only for ourselves now but also for generations of Catholics to come.

We will continue to provide you with additional updates on the financial and organizational affairs of the Diocese. As we strive more responsibly to manage our household for the good of all the faithful in northwest Ohio, we will do so by being ever more evangelical, effective and efficient in all we do. While these decisions are difficult and painful, I remain confident that with the Lord's grace, we will continue to foster Holy Disciples, Holy Families and Holy Vocations to become a Holy Diocese of Toledo.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,



Most Reverend Daniel E. Thomas
Bishop of Toledo