



DIOCESE OF TOLEDO
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

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**Diocese of Toledo Announces Steps
to Begin to Address Financial Challenges**

The Diocese of Toledo today announced steps aimed at beginning to address its financial challenges, including a projected \$1.3 million deficit for the upcoming fiscal year (July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017). The measures – approved by Bishop Daniel E. Thomas as part of an ongoing comprehensive review of operations – include a 20 percent reduction in expenses at the administrative offices of the Diocese, the ceasing of the Catholic Chronicle newspaper and website, and the elimination of the diocesan-produced televised Sunday Catholic Mass.

These steps will sharply reduce the expected deficit, provide better stewardship for operations, and help ensure improved financial health for the Diocese.

“We must be committed to cease our practice of deficit spending,” Bishop Thomas said. “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.”

Catholic Chronicle

The 20-to-28 page Catholic Chronicle newspaper is printed 11 times per year and distributed via the Diocese’s 123 parishes and mailed to a subscriber list of less than 1,000.

Currently staffed by three full-time and two part-time professionals, the Catholic Chronicle has an operating budget of \$458,191 for the 2015-16 fiscal year with a budgeted deficit of \$275,191. The Catholic Chronicle’s annual expenses and deficit have continued to increase in each of the last three years.

The Catholic Chronicle was founded in 1934 by Archbishop Karl J. Alter, the Third Bishop of Toledo, who contracted with Catholic Press Union to produce a newspaper for the Diocese. In 1985, the Catholic Chronicle came under the auspices of the Diocese after Catholic Press Union disbanded. The paper moved from a weekly to biweekly printing schedule in 1982, and then moved to a monthly publication in 2005 – all in an effort to trim escalating printing and distribution costs. The rising cost of newsprint and postage forced the Catholic Chronicle to

make changes again in 2009, reverting back to a bimonthly publication while dramatically reducing its page count. Then in 2011, the newspaper changed formats once more – settling on the current 11-month publication calendar and its smaller tabloid format.

According to web analytics, the Catholic Chronicle’s website has averaged 3,500-4,100 unique visitors each month and fewer than 27,000 page views over the last three months. By comparison, the Diocese of Toledo website, www.toledodiocese.org, saw nearly 30,000 unique visitors and had 168,000 page views over the same time span.

The printer of the Catholic Chronicle recently decided to downsize and opted not to retain the Catholic Chronicle as a client after printing the February 2016 issue.

All employees involved in the staff reduction will be eligible for severance in accordance with diocesan policy.

Televised Sunday Catholic Mass

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.

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 the Diocese’s televised Sunday Mass. In addition, the average number of viewers is fewer than 7,500.

In the last several years, numerous alternate options for a video or audio broadcast of a Sunday Catholic Mass have become available. Those include:

- The Sunday Mass broadcast nationally on EWTN at 8 a.m. and noon.
- A Sunday Mass is broadcast at 10:30 a.m. on Fort Wayne’s WFFT-TV and can be seen in Defiance, Paulding, Williams and Van Wert counties.
- A Sunday Mass is broadcast at 6 a.m. on Cleveland’s WJW-TV and can be seen in Erie, Huron, Richland, Seneca and Sandusky counties.
- A Sunday Mass is broadcast at 7:30 a.m. on Columbus’ WWHO-TV and can be seen in Crawford County.
- Numerous audio broadcasts of the Sunday Mass from Catholic radio affiliates across the Diocese of Toledo.

As a pastoral response, the Diocese is developing a plan to assist its 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, 215 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.

Responses to questions regarding the Catholic Chronicle included:

- 45 percent stated that “dozens” of copies of the Catholic Chronicle are left over at their parish at the end of each month and are discarded.
- Another 13 percent stated that “hundreds” of copies remain unread each month and are discarded.
- Only 4 percent of respondents indicated that no copies of the Catholic Chronicle are left over at their parish at the end of each month.
- Nearly 50 percent stated that they “never” visited www.catholicchronicle.org, the Catholic Chronicle’s website.
- Only 4 percent of respondents indicated that they visited the Catholic Chronicle’s website daily or weekly.

Responses to questions regarding the Diocese’s televised Sunday Catholic Mass included:

- 30 percent stated that “a handful” of parishioners at their parish watch the Sunday Catholic Mass on a regular basis.
- Another 21 percent stated that “none” of their fellow parishioners at their parish watch the Sunday Catholic Mass on a regular basis.
- Only 3 percent of respondents estimated that “hundreds” of parishioners watch the Sunday Catholic Mass.

Moving Forward

The Diocese of Toledo will continue to provide additional updates on its financial and organizational affairs as part of the commitment Bishop Thomas made in his letter to the faithful dated November 21, 2015, after the one-year anniversary of his installation as Bishop of Toledo.

“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,” Bishop Thomas said. “As the father of this family of faith, it is my sacred duty to be a faithful steward of the household entrusted to me. 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.”

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