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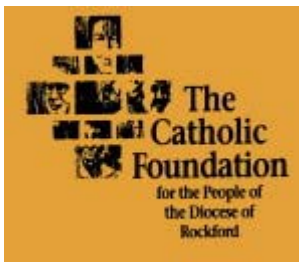
Planned Giving News

Catholic Diocese of Rockford

April 2009



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**From Greg Urban,
Diocesan Director of
Planned Giving**



Dear Greg :

As we continue the celebration of Easter, we need to keep reminding ourselves of Christ's mission here on earth. I have included in this issue an article from the Good Steward Newsletter by Dan Conway. I thought it to be right on point.

Staying Focused on Mission during Challenging Times

(by Daniel Conway - Used with permission)

In his pastoral letter "The Church Sharing!" Bishop David A. Zubik reflects on a story of Pittsburgh during the Great Depression:

A long time ago - nearly 80 years ago, during the first years of the Great Depression - people in Pittsburgh were out of work, kids were going hungry, the elderly were being forgotten. It was a time when hope had almost disappeared, and men and women viewed their world with quiet desperation as all the old certainties were falling apart; the job at the mill, food on the table, a decent place to live, a plan for the future. All these good things that only a few years before had been the expectation when a person faced a new day were no longer there. They held onto their faith in God, but it was hard to have faith in anything else.

And then came another tragedy in a Pittsburgh community that seemed to have no heart for any more tragedies. On July 24, 1931, just an hour after everyone had gone to sleep, fire broke out at a home for the needy elderly people operated by the Little Sisters of the Poor on Penn Avenue in Lawrenceville. Forty-nine of the elderly poor would be killed by that fire, another 175 injured.

The city was shocked by the horror of it all. In too many ways, it summed up the tragedy of the Depression itself. Innocent victims consumed by something that they didn't understand, couldn't control, hadn't caused. The bodies of those who died were taken away for burial by relatives. All, that is, except for eight victims, who lay in the morgue, unknown and unclaimed. This had been a home for the aged poor, after all, and it shouldn't be surprising that some were without anyone, not even someone to bury the dead. Homeless folks with nowhere else to go, they had been forgotten outside the walls of their last shelter. Bishop Hugh Boyle, the sixth Bishop of Pittsburgh, stepped in. He brought their bodies to Saint Paul Cathedral where he would preside at their funeral Mass. And then something amazing happened.

At that Mass on August 3, in the midst of the Depression, eight homeless and poor folk, whose past was known only to God, were remembered by one of the largest crowds ever to gather at Saint Paul Cathedral. The people of the city filled every pew. They spilled out onto the sidewalks and streets. Catholics and Protestants, Christians and non-Christians, believers and non-believers, they had come together to pay what respects they could to the remains of eight human beings lying in donated caskets. It was as if the city itself was coming together to come to terms with its grief over the fire and, perhaps even more so, to come to terms with the Depression itself.

Many of us have a tendency to resist asking for monetary support during tough economic times such as these because we don't want to offend those who are unable to give. This is certainly understandable. However, we must remember that there are people in a position to give, and to give even more than normal, knowing that others can't.

The Church has a mission. It is important to remember that it is in times such as these that we must reach out and be an example to all the world of what we can accomplish, both materially and spiritually, for those in need if we keep and convey proper focus on our true mission.

P.S. Now is the time to schedule Estate Planning Seminars for this calendar year. It is most effective to conduct these seminars at your at least every other year. Give me a call today to schedule one at your parish!

Keep planting seeds!

Ministry Quicklinks

[Rockford Stewardship web](#)
[Catholic Foundation web](#)

The story does not end there. A week after the funeral, Bishop Boyle went on the radio - the first Pittsburgh bishop to do so - to ask for help. The Little Sisters of the Poor and those whom they served were homeless. It may have seemed a fool's errand at a time when so many had nothing to even care for their own. But the bishop asked for donations to build a new home for the Sisters and those they served. He said they would need \$300,000 to rebuild. Within three months, the people of Pittsburgh contributed that, and more.

Like our ancestors of this story many decades ago, we are facing hard times in the months ahead, maybe even in the years ahead. No one really knows how long and that is part of the worry itself. What jobs will be lost? How high will the unemployment rate climb? Knowing that behind every percentage point there are thousands of human stories, how many more will lose their homes? We know the poor that we have with us now - their fears, their needs, their desperation. How many more will be among us tomorrow? Will hard times mean that hope is hard to come by as well? These are the kinds of questions we go to sleep with each night and wake with each morning.

But then I remember those crowds eight decades ago filling Saint Paul Cathedral to honor the eight unknown poor. I think of people who had so little themselves, giving pennies, nickels and dimes to rebuild a home so that the Little Sisters of the Poor could care for those in need. I think of Pittsburgh - people of every race, color and creed - reaching out to those who need help. And I realize and I take hope in the knowledge that this is the Pittsburgh as true today as it was those many years ago - a Church poised to help those in need, The Church Sharing.

What would have happened in Pittsburgh during the Great Depression if Bishop Boyle had said, "Those eight homeless people are not our problem."? The mission of the Church would have been stifled. Christ, in the persons of the eight unknown, unclaimed victims, would not have been anointed with oil or buried in the tomb. The Cathedral of St. Paul would have been empty, and there would have been no crowd to receive the Body of Christ that day. What if Bishop Boyle had said, "I can't ask people for money now. They don't have it, and they'll resent me for trying to pick their empty pockets."? The loaves and fish would not have been multiplied. The crowd would not have been fed. The elderly poor would have had no home, no Little Sisters of the Poor to care for them.

Catholic organizations that have a vision and plan have a solid anchor or mooring during storms. The most dramatic example I know is the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The archdiocese's pastoral plan was promulgated one year before hurricane Katrina hit. All of the plan's details were wiped out with the storm, but Archbishop Hughes will tell you that the process of planning gave them the discipline to articulate mission and long-term goals that helped tremendously as the Church struggled to respond to people's most basic needs during Katrina's chaotic aftermath. The archdioceses of Louisville and Indianapolis have been planning for more than 20 years. Several crises have occurred in each diocese during this time - economic downturns, sex abuse scandals, etc., but the discipline of planning has helped each diocese stay focused on mission and priorities during good times and hard times. The Diocese of Orlando's Synod was a response to dramatic growth in central Florida. It affirms the Church's commitment to share, lead and grow in service to the rapidly growing and changing needs of an increasingly diverse Catholic community. The Orlando Synod obviously did not anticipate the "perfect economic storm" that has devastated our global economy the way Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, but the need to share, lead and grow remains -

perhaps more vitally than ever - in central Florida as in the Universal Church!

Staying focused on long-term vision and plans helps Catholic organizations to better respond to short-term challenges. The temptation (always) is to freeze, to stop dead in our tracks, and wait out the storm. The problem with this approach is that the Church, the Body of Christ, cannot put its mission on hold. We are called to preach the Good News at all times, and in all seasons, but our preaching is more important than ever when people are in danger of losing hope. We are called to be the arms and legs of Jesus Christ always and everywhere, but the healing ministry of our Lord is more important than ever when people are hurting or afraid or in need of authentic charity, the love of God in action.

If our mission is properly aligned with what the Lord is calling us to be and do as Church, there is no way we can wait out the storm. Our methods may have to change, our resources may be more limited and our strategies may have to be adjusted to fit changing circumstances, but our commitment to proclaim God's kingdom, and to be the seed and beginning of that kingdom here and now, must be stronger than ever.

In The YES of Jesus Christ, Pope Benedict XVI tells us that even after the most tragic catastrophes of history, "God remains God: he remains good with indestructible goodness. He remains the redeemer in whose hands man's destructive and cruel activity is transformed by His love. Man is not the only actor on the stage of human history, and that is why death does not have the last word in it. The fact that there is this other person who is active is alone the firm and certain anchor of a hope that is stronger and more real than all the frightfulnesses of the world."

Jesus Christ is the one true hope - and the only source of lasting joy.

May this Easter bring us all closer to the firm and certain anchor of His hope! May the gift of His love empower us to proclaim the Kingdom without hesitation or fear during these challenging times. That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:11).

Bulletin Blurbs

The following messages can be appropriately inserted into your weekly bulletin:

Estate Planning is the Way to Continue Your Life's Work

It is vital that you invest some time to insure that your life's efforts will continue in the hands of the causes and people who will most treasure your gifts. Your attorney in conjunction with your accountant will prepare a proper will and make other arrangements for the easy, inexpensive transfer of your estate.

Memorialize a Loved One with a Gift to Our Endowment

Your gift will bear your loved one's name, and may be in any amount. It's a beautiful way to pass on our Catholic heritage and remember someone special. Contact the parish office to learn more.

Make a Gift that Will Make a Difference

Your gifts of cash, stock, real estate and insurance are needed to make our endowment grow, giving our Church a perpetual income. Contact

Greg Urban at 815-399-4300 ext. 358 to learn more of how a gift today can be transformed into an eternal gift that helps pass on our Catholic heritage.

Contact Info

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