



# PARISH FINANCE PROGRAM

DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT · 2007

Dear Friends in Christ,

For close to 2,000 years, the Roman Catholic Church has spread the Gospel message of Jesus Christ to the faithful by conveying the living Word of God, celebrating the sacraments, and serving the poor and needy. Through these years our faith has guided us and allowed us to lead souls closer to God.



In the first years of this new century, we have taken pause to look at all aspects affecting our Church in the world as it exists today. To operate in today's world, we must ensure that we are good stewards of the resources entrusted to our care, complying with all legal and regulatory agencies and properly managing all available technology in our Church.

To achieve this, I have expanded our **Parish Finance Program** for our 87 parishes in Fairfield County. A program of this nature is common to many for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. When representing the Roman Catholic Church, we have an obligation to assure everyone that we conduct ourselves in a manner beyond reproach, making ourselves transparent and accountable at all times.

I am indebted to our Pastors, Priests, and Deacons for their cooperation and leadership in implementing our program to enhance and improve parish finances, and for their continued dedication to their ministry. I also acknowledge the contributions of our lay faithful who work or volunteer in our parishes with distinction.

In accomplishing the above, we will keep our focus on our mission, to remain a strong Church and continue to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Reverend William E. Lori, S.T.D.  
Bishop of Bridgeport

May 2007

## OVERVIEW

### **The Role of the Pastor**

The Pastor is the spiritual leader of the parish community. According to Canon law (the law of the Catholic Church), he is also the person directly responsible for the day-in and day-out administration of the parish, including oversight of employees and volunteers, and stewardship of all financial matters (Canon 532).

Like the father of a family, the Pastor is the leader of the parish to whom all staff and parishioners report. All Pastors recognize, however, that the lay faithful must play an important role in assisting them in the administration of the parish.

Pastors are always seeking ways to encourage parishioners to become more involved in the life of the parish. One of the key ways to help is through the Parish Finance Council, where members can share their professional advice and expertise.

### **The Role of the Parish Finance Council**

Canon law mandates that every parish have a Parish Finance Council, which is advisory to the Pastor. As a good steward, the Pastor is expected to invite qualified parishioners to sit on the Parish Finance Council and offer their expertise and advice.

Regular meetings of the Parish Finance Council cover a wide range of issues, such as:

- Support the Pastor to safeguard the assets of the parish.
- Oversee the preparation of budgets for approval.
- Monitor the financial performance and effectiveness of offertory collections and other fund-raising activities.
- Develop plans for the financing of repairs and renovations of property and purchase of equipment, as needed.
- Oversee implementation of all Diocesan policies on financial matters.
- Monitor procedures and controls to ensure that all requirements of federal and state tax laws are met and accurate records are maintained.

With the help of the Parish Finance Council, the Pastor prepares and publishes an Annual Financial Report for distribution to the Parish Council and the members of the parish community.

## THE SIX KEY ELEMENTS

### The Role of the Diocese

The Diocese of Bridgeport provides ongoing support to the 87 parishes in Fairfield County on all matters spiritual and temporal. Bishop William E. Lori plays a leadership role. In terms of the good stewardship of resources entrusted to the care of the Church, Bishop Lori seeks the the advice and support of experienced Pastors who comprise the College of Consultors, and the Diocesan Finance Council, which includes lay men and women with appropriate professional expertise.

The Diocese's **Parish Finance Program** was expanded in 2006. Led by the Chief Financial Officer and his Diocesan Finance Services team, the program is based on "Six Key Elements" to enhance parish financial controls and promote transparency and accountability. These elements, developed by a balanced Task Force of Pastors and lay members of the Diocesan Finance Council, serve to bring the Diocese and parishes into compliance with the financial accountability which is expected in both the for-profit and not-for-profit worlds.

The Six Key Elements are:

- Refine and update the *Parish Accounting and Procedures Manual* and deliver related training.
- Provide guidance to parishes for improved controls over income.
- Design new parish financial reports to improve understanding and monitoring at all levels.
- Perform reviews and tests of parish financial controls, and meet with each Parish Corporation at least once a year.
- Help pastors assess the capabilities of parishes to maintain financial records, and recommend training where needed.
- Encourage parishioners with concerns about parish financial matters to speak directly with their Pastor. The Diocese will communicate the procedure for parishioners to communicate any unresolved concerns they have to Parish Finance Services.

### Everyone's Responsibility

The last of the Six Key Elements is of particular importance to our Priests, Deacons, Religious, Lay Employees, Volunteers, and all our Parishioners. In the box at right is the procedure to convey your concerns about parish finances. You have a responsibility to raise these concerns by following the protocol as indicated.

## HOW TO REPORT YOUR CONCERNS

All Priests, Deacons, Religious, Lay Employees, Volunteers, and Parishioners of the Diocese of Bridgeport with concerns about financial activity at their parish should report these concerns to the designated representatives as indicated below.

All concerns about financial matters will be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The investigation shall remain confidential, and those conducting the investigation shall respect the privacy of all persons involved. No adverse action shall be taken or permitted against anyone for communicating legitimate concerns to the appropriate representatives.

The following steps represent the reporting sequence:

### **Step 1: Speak to your Pastor.**

*If this step is not appropriate, or if your concerns remain unanswered, proceed to Step 2.*

### **Step 2: Speak to the Chairperson of your Parish Finance Council,** whose name is published in your Sunday parish bulletin.

*If this step is not appropriate, or if your concerns remain unanswered, proceed to Step 3.*

### **Step 3: Contact the Director of Parish Finance Services of the Diocese of Bridgeport: Deacon Bill Koniers**

You can telephone (203) 416-1500 or e-mail [DeaconKoniers@diobpt.org](mailto:DeaconKoniers@diobpt.org)

*Please note: It is always appropriate to proceed directly to Step 3 if the circumstances warrant.*