

Bishop Lawrence E. Brandt announces \$45 million capital and endowment campaign for the Diocese of Greensburg

GREENSBURG — Taking the next step in a diocesanwide strategic planning process that started nearly four years ago, Greensburg Bishop Lawrence E. Brandt today (Sept. 14, 2009) unveiled a \$45 million capital and endowment campaign to support a wide variety of initiatives in the diocese and its parishes.

Bishop Brandt publicly announced the “Today’s Challenge ~ Tomorrow’s Hope” Capital and Endowment Campaign for the Diocese of Greensburg at a media conference Sept. 14 at the Bishop William G. Connare Center.

Bishop Brandt also announced the co-chairpersons for the campaign: Michael and Janice Walker, parishioners of Holy Family Parish, Latrobe; John and Kim Dolan, parishioners of St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish, Indiana; and Richard and Christine Zappone, parishioners of Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Parish, Greensburg.

Michael Walker is owner and president of Loyalhanna Management Services and owner, chairman and executive vice president of CME Engineering. He made opening remarks and introduced Bishop Brandt at the news conference.

John Dolan is president and chief executive officer of First Commonwealth Financial Corp.

Richard Zappone is president of The Westmoreland Group, which he and Christine own.

Bishop Brandt also announced the honorary co-chairs for the campaign. They are Paul and Anne Smiy, and their daughter, Patricia, parishioners of Immaculate Conception Parish, Irwin, and Robert and Irene Bozzone, parishioners of St. Margaret Mary Parish, Lower Burrell.

Bishop Brandt said the campaign, which began in select parishes earlier this year, has already generated more than \$19 million in gifts and pledges, or 42 percent of the overall goal. Bishop Brandt said the campaign has received 10 leadership gifts totaling more than \$7 million, gifts from diocesan clergy totaling more than \$400,000, and 4,500 gifts from parishioners totaling nearly \$12 million.

“To the many generous people who have shown their dedication to the Church of Greensburg, especially to the thousands of faithful parishioners who have already made gifts, I extend my heartfelt and profound gratitude with prayers of thanksgiving,” he said. “They have shown this effort can be accomplished. It is because of them that I am able to stand here and make this announcement today.”

Bishop Brandt explained that the campaign is an outgrowth of the diocesan strategic planning process, a consultative process involving parishioners, clergy and every advisory group in the diocese.

The centerpiece of that process was the 2006 Diocesan Lenten Listening Sessions, which was a series of 85 meetings around the diocese (Armstrong, Fayette, Indiana and Westmoreland counties) that generated observations and thoughts from approximately 9,000 parishioners and clergy on issues “important to the future of their faith and the Catholic Church in their beloved diocese,” he said.

That planning process has already led to many changes in the diocese, including the parish restructurings announced by Bishop Brandt last October 6 — the closing of 14 parishes, the merging of two other parishes to form a new parish in central Indiana County and the establishment of a series of parish partnerings that involved 26 parishes. Forty of the diocese’s 85 parishes share a priest. They are under the pastoral care of 19 priests.

Bishop Brandt noted that the planning process included recommendations in other areas “critical to our work as a church: evangelization and faith formation, youth and young adult ministry, our 17 Catholic schools, ordained and lay ecclesial ministry, and the Sacrament of Confirmation.”

“This process established the central priorities for our diocese for the next 15-20 years,” he said. “These areas identify where we will invest in a focused way our human, financial and material resources.”

Bishop Brandt announced several new initiatives in the areas of evangelization and faith formation in August in a pastoral letter, “The Transmission of Faith in the Present Culture,” which established a Catechetical Master Plan for the entire diocese.

“Now that we have identified and started implementing initiatives that are important to our future as a church,” Bishop Brandt said, “we must fund that future. We must give financial legs to what we have together identified as priorities.”

Planning for the campaign started nearly two years ago with a feasibility study, he said, and several parishes have already successfully conducted their campaigns this year.

The feasibility study included the development of a case for support, strongly recommended that a fundraising effort be conducted in a manner that clearly shows the close link between the parishes and the diocese, and suggested that an overall goal of \$45 million was attainable.

Finally, the study recommended that 40 percent of all funds generated in the campaign, \$18 million, remain in the parishes. Those funds will support specific parish needs as determined by the pastor and parish lay leaders, including capital improvements, ministry development, endowments and debt elimination.

The case for support further recommended that the majority of the \$27 million designated to support diocesan services, which are services that are returned to the parishes to support their work, be placed in endowment funds. The case recommended that a total of \$23.5 million be directed to new and existing

endowment funds to provide long-term funding for various priorities. And \$3.5 million will be used on capital projects in the near future.

The case for diocesan support is:

- \$3.5 million to establish an Evangelization and Faith Formation Endowment Fund to support the initiatives outlined in Bishop Brandt's pastoral letter "The Transmission of Faith in the Present Culture";
- \$5 million to enhance the Diocesan Catholic Schools Tuition Assistance Endowment Fund to increase scholarship aid to students and their families at the elementary and high school levels;
- \$1.5 million to establish a Catholic Elementary School Capital Maintenance Endowment Fund to support capital needs at 15 elementary school buildings;
- \$1 million to enhance the Ordained Ministry Endowment Fund to support education and formation of priests and the permanent diaconate program;
- \$1 million to enhance the Lay Ecclesial Ministry Endowment Fund to support the formation and education of lay ministers;
- \$4 million to bolster the Priest Pension Fund that supports retired diocesan priests;
- \$3 million to create a Catholic Charities Endowment Fund to support the social service arm of the diocese;
- \$4.5 million to establish a Diocesan Capital Maintenance Endowment Fund to help offset the repair and maintenance costs of buildings for which the diocese is responsible.

The \$3.5 million that will support capital projects will be used for renovations at Neumann House, the diocesan residence for retired priests here at the Bishop William G. Connare Center, and renovations to Blessed Sacrament Cathedral.

The campaign has unfolded in a series of phases, Bishop Brandt explained. In the first phase early this year, five parishes, at least one from each of our four counties, were invited to be part of the model phase to test the overall case for support. The parishes were large and small, suburban and rural, with a diversity of geography and socioeconomic surroundings. Two of the five parishes were invited because they were directly impacted by parish closings last year.

"That phase was a resounding success as reflected in the fact that the five parishes received gifts and pledges of \$2.8 million, surpassing their collective goal of \$2.4 million," Bishop Brandt said.

He said 21 parishes successfully completed their campaigns this summer with gifts and pledges of more than \$4.3 million on a collective goal of \$4.2 million.

The latest phase of the campaign is now underway in 24 parishes with more than 500 volunteer lay leaders in place to help direct their parish efforts. The parishes have a cumulative goal of more than \$15.4 million and already have received more than \$3 million in gifts and pledges.

The final group of 35 parishes will begin their campaigns in early 2010. All active campaign solicitation will be completed by June 2010.

Bishop Brandt thanked many priests and lay people for their support and said he is optimistic about the campaign.

“I am confident that with the continued prayers of our people, with their commitments of time and with their sacrificial giving, our parishes will all be successful in this important effort,” he said.

“We are undertaking this effort to continue building up the Kingdom of God here in the Diocese of Greensburg, using the gifts the Lord has bestowed on us in a manner commensurate with the requirements of good stewardship,” Bishop Brandt said.