



2021-2022 CASE STATEMENT



THAT THEY MAY
BE ONE AS WE
ARE ONE

JOHN 17:22

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Diocesan Annual Appeal

CASE STATEMENT 2021-22



DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE MISSION STATEMENT:

Called by Jesus Christ to "Seek first the kingdom of God;" we are the Diocese of La Crosse, a sacramental people, who worship God, teach the Catholic faith, and serve the needs of the human person

DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE VISION STATEMENT:

We, the Catholic Diocese of La Crosse, living Christ's message "I am the vine, you are the branches," strive to awaken in each other a deeper connection with Christ through active parish life and authentic discipleship.

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE DIOCESAN ANNUAL APPEAL

We are called by Christ, transformed by our baptism, sustained in our relationship with Jesus through the sacraments to be stewards of the Good News of His Holy Gospel. The Diocesan Annual Appeal seeks financial and philanthropic gifts by providing an opportunity for sacrificial giving. It serves the Lord by funding those ministries that work to provide relief for the needs of all God's people in our communities by making a significant and positive impact on the lives of our neighbors.

VOCATIONS, PRIESTS, DEACONS, AND RELIGIOUS

SEMINARY EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS FORMATION

- 13 seminarians
- 7 participants in Regency/Journey programs

Spiritually and financially responsible for providing priests for the Diocese of La Crosse belongs to all of us. There will be thirteen men engaged in seminary studies for our Diocese at college and theological seminaries for the 2021-2022 school year. We also have two men in the Journey Program who are from our Diocese.

The House of Formation includes the Regency and Journey programs, which help young men discern their vocational call, emphasizing the call to the priesthood. In addition, throughout the year, there are discernment retreats offered for middle school, high school, and college-age men.

Most of our funds are used for tuition and formation fees for our seminarians, including support literature, technology, and materials needed for their studies.

VOCATIONS PROMOTION:

These funds support literature, technology, and materials that primarily promote vocations to the priesthood. They also support all vocational, discernment, and the vocational portions of confirmation retreats and parish programs for middle school to adults.

VICAR FOR CLERGY:

The Vicar for Clergy oversees the health and well-being of 86 Active Diocesan priests, 31 International Priests, and, in cooperation with the Vicar for Senior Clergy, 28 Senior Priests.

CONTINUING EDUCATION OF CLERGY:

Our priests need ongoing intellectual formation and regular spiritual enrichment to help them more effectively respond to the needs of their people; educational programs, retreats, and sabbaticals are an absolute necessity. Furthermore, some priests are working on advanced degrees to assist the Bishop in continuing our Diocese's teaching mission.

INTERNATIONAL PRIESTS:

31 International Priests serve in Diocesan parishes

The Diocesan Annual Appeal funds the training and support of our international priests for service in the parishes of the Diocese of La Crosse. Due to the shortage of Diocesan priests, our international priests serve a vital role in providing our Catholic communities, celebrating the Eucharist and other sacraments, and the administration of our parishes.

CLERGY HEALTHCARE:

The Diocese ensures full funding of our priest's medical needs since insurance does not cover all their medical needs. In addition, the Diocese needs more financial support due to rising health care costs and unfunded expenses, including some medications and long-term health care.

OFFICE FOR THE DIACONATE:

The Office for the Diaconate oversees the 64 Deacons of the Diocese and those men in formation.

- 23 men are in Deacon Formation
- 5 Deacons were ordained in 2020
- 9 Men may be ordained in the spring of 2022, God willing.
- 55 Deacons in active ministry

These funds are for the education and formation of future deacons for our Diocese and continuing education and support of our current deacons. Deacons assist the Bishop and priests by their ministry of charity to those suffering or on the margins of society and through teaching, proclaiming the Gospel, assisting at the altar, and carrying out other various apostolic works.

OFFICE FOR CONSECRATED LIFE

The Diocesan Annual Appeal funds the Office for Consecrated Life, which serves the men and women in consecrated life in the Diocese of La Crosse. Specific services include visits with communities and individual consecrated persons, consulting with people seeking canonical status, assisting religious who seek ministry in the Diocese, coordinating the Retirement Fund for Religious, and promoting vocations in collaboration with the Diocesan Office for Vocations.

PARISH MINISTRIES SUPPORT

The Offices of the Diocesan Curia assist the Bishop, parishes, schools, and various apostolates in providing for the essential pastoral needs of our people. Therefore, gifts to the Diocesan Annual Appeal for the support of these ministries are vital to the well-being of the local Church. The Diocesan Annual Appeal supports the Offices of the Diocesan Curia, including:

OFFICE FOR CATECHESIS AND EVANGELIZATION

The Office for Catechesis and Evangelization exists to help lead every person to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. The Office serves clergy, parish and school staff, and laity in our life-long formation process in seeking to

be faithful disciples of Christ through committed reception of the Sacraments, daily prayer, and participating in active parish life. The Office offers authentic Catholic resources and assists parishes and schools to provide in-services with solid content and methods at the diocesan, deanery, and parish levels. This Office also affords and oversees opportunities for certification for Catholic school teachers and parish directors and catechists in doctrine, Scripture, Catholic spirituality, and methods to equip them to teach the Catholic Faith properly. Evangelization resources, such as bulletin inserts and materials that correspond with Bible studies and Adult Study Programs, are developed for ongoing faith enrichment. This Office also coordinates the Hmong Ministry and Ministry for Persons with Special Needs (MPSN).

The Office for Catechesis and Evangelization maintains a resource library with free rental use for the parishes and Catholic schools. In addition, this Office collaborates with other Diocesan offices on evangelization, the RCIA process, and adult and children faith formation to form missionary disciples.

This year, every person in the Diocese of La Crosse has free access to *Franciscan at Home*. This beautiful and robust online learning system seeks to form those who form others, with the spiritual life of the learner as the primary focus. The format of each workshop consists of a one-hour video, broken up into ten-minute segments, for the busy person, followed by an application task. The workshops are geared toward parents, teachers, parish leaders, an RCIA team, any interested adult.

NEW PARISH: MARY, MOTHER OF GOOD HELP PARISH, SERVES HMONG CATHOLICS:

- 3,500 people assisted

A good number of Hmong Catholics reside in the Diocese of La Crosse. Mary, Mother of Good Help Hmong Parish in Wausau, has a full-time pastor with two part-time Hmong catechists, one priest-chaplain, and the Diocesan Coordinator in the La Crosse area serve the area's Hmong Catholics. Our Hmong brothers and sisters receive instruction in the faith and ongoing formation to help them become authentic disciples and be active members in their parishes. Hmong are prepared for the reception of the Sacraments and assisted when sick and in need.

There is a growing outreach to the Hmong who are Christian but do not understand the basic Gospel message and those who have never heard of Jesus Christ. Catholic booklets of the Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, and Stations of the Cross have been translated into Hmong to foster a deeper relationship with Christ through prayer.

A daily conference call for Hmong families to pray together the Divine Mercy Chaplet at 3 p.m. and the Holy Rosary at 8 p.m. began with the outbreak of Covid -19 and continues today. In addition, young people are encouraged to participate in parish youth ministry to grow in their faith. Your gift also provides tuition assistance to needy Hmong families with children in Catholic schools.

OFFICE FOR FAMILY LIFE

The Office for Family Life seeks to accompany people of all ages in their faith journey by helping them recognize their relationship with Christ as the source of everything they are and everything they do. Our Office's mission is to provide opportunities and resources to help individuals, couples, families, and parishes strengthen their relationships with each other and our Lord. We want as many people possible to journey with us, not only as those being ministered to but also doing the ministry. The Office for Family Life is a service Office. However, we are also a partnership office pulling together individuals, families, clergy, and parishes to speak and live out the Gospel message.

The ministries we work with are: Marriage Preparation for Engaged Couples, Marriage Enrichment, NFP (Natural Family Planning), Youth Ministry, Young Adult Ministry, Men's Ministry, Women's Ministry, Troubled Marriage Ministry, Divorce Ministry, and Bereavement Ministry. Each of these ministries has resources to help people go deeper into their relationship with Christ and opportunities to engage in person and virtually with one another. In addition, the Office oversees several programs, including:

- In collaboration with the Office Catechesis and Evangelization, we offer training to parish ministers for Baptism preparation.
- Men's Ministry, which coordinates the annual Men of the Cross conference in late October, empowers ongoing parish and deanery men's groups and provides resource materials and listings of regional men's conferences.
- Women's Ministry, which provides support materials and listings of regional women's conferences.
- Separated and Divorced Catholics, which focuses on providing resources to separated couples (e.g., Retrouvaille, Catholic Counselors, Marriage Mentors, etc.) and inviting those who are divorced to stay connected with their Church and explore a declaration of nullity.
- The Ministry of Consolation provides training to deaneries and parishes for supporting families and individuals during the time of loss.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION:

The Office for Family Life devotes most of its time and energy to collaborating and empowering individuals at the parish and deanery level to prepare engaged couples for a lifelong, healthy, happy, and holy marriage to combat the societal trends attacking marriage. As a result, more than 450 couples were married in the Diocese last year. There are three main areas of formation:

1. Deanery level retreat called Married Love: Two Becoming One, which allows engaged couples to learn from married couples who share on the topics of Faithfulness, Permanence, and Openness to Life and hear from clergy on the Covenantal nature of marriage.
2. Parish level pre-marriage inventory, called FOCCUS, helps engaged couples discuss aspects of their relationship through the guidance of trained facilitators.
3. Natural Family Planning instruction is offered by trainers from within the Diocese. This instruction on following the Church's teachings on love and life is not exclusive to engaged couples, and more than 500 individuals receive instruction annually.

The Office also invests in remote preparation for marriage through age-appropriate presentations to youth on God's plan for love and life.

MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT:

The sacramental union of man and woman in Holy Matrimony is a never-ending process of guiding one's spouse toward Heaven. Various conferences, evenings of reflection, and retreats are offered to assist people on this journey. Some of these opportunities are for couples, and some options are specific to the individual. However, ultimately, all are designed to strengthen the person and the couple's relationship with Christ.

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY:

The Office for Family Life assists parishes, middle schools, high schools, and Universities to lead their young people (ages 12-39) to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, ongoing growth in their Catholic Faith, and the use of their gifts for the good of the Church and the world. We serve the parishes by assisting them in starting and continuing their youth ministry programs. We also provide a variety of opportunities for young people to experience and grow deeper in their Faith. The Diocesan Annual Appeal helps support the many events coordinated through this Office.

- The training conferences for youth ministers and teams
- Individual parish retreats
- Local, regional, and national conferences
- World Youth Day
- Adventure Camps
- The Immersion Retreat
- Young Adult Retreat
- National and international mission service trips
- Other opportunities that arise meet the needs of the young people and leaders.

These opportunities energize and strengthen the Faith of the young people. Then, when they return to their parish youth-ministry programs, they can be good examples of living out their faith to their peers and other parishioners.

HIGH SCHOOL FAITH FORMATION:

Confirmed young people need opportunities to help them continue their faith journey in the Catholic Church, discern their vocation in life, and prepare for adult responsibilities. Our goal is to collaboratively work with parishes and schools to engage the young people into the life of the Church by helping them see they are not only the future of the Church but are very much an active and vital part of the present-day Church.

OFFICE FOR MINISTRIES AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND MISSION:

The Office for Ministries and Social Concerns seeks to awaken unity in Faith and discipleship in multiple ways. The Office directs formation for the permanent diaconate and formation programs for the laity, including the

Lay Formation Institute and the Leader of Prayer Program. It also coordinates pastoral care of the Hispanic community, implements the directives of the Diocesan Bishop consistent with the social teachings of the Church, and collaborates with the U.S. Bishops' programs for national and international relief and development. The Office is also working closely with Catholic Charities, the Diocesan Mission Office, and the diocesan Social Ministry Advisory Committee to foster charity and social advocacy initiatives in parishes and deaneries throughout the Diocese. Finally, the Office administers grant programs for the continuing education of men and women involved in pastoral work.

TEAM FOCUS:

The Office for Ministries and Social Concerns has been working ever more closely with the Office for Catechesis and Evangelization, Catholic Schools, and Family Life on common goals. A current focus has been on Pope St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body. We have sought to integrate its teaching on the nature, dignity, and vocation of the human person into the human and religious formation at all levels. This collaboration has unified our efforts as we work to form young people and adults alike and show the relevance to human sexuality, respect for life, love of neighbor, and discipleship in Christ in general. Another common effort has been the implementation of the Franciscan at Home Online Learning Program. Its vast array of workshops contributes to the continuing formation of teachers, catechists, youth ministers, RCIA team members, liturgy coordinators, social ministry and respect life advocates, etc. The unity in Faith and focus that our offices have enjoyed has been quite fruitful, and we project that this will only increase.

DEACON FORMATION:

- Currently, we have twenty-three men in Deacon Formation, with nine of these scheduled to be ordained in May of 2022. In addition, we have twelve men who are enrolled and sponsored by the Dioceses of Madison and Superior joining us.

LAY FORMATION:

- We have twenty-two students in their first year of the two-year Lay Formation Institute (more than 850 commissioned since 1973).
- Twenty-four new Leaders of Prayer were commissioned in August of 2021 (more than 350 have been commissioned since 1989).

DEACON FORMATION:

Funds from the Diocesan Annual Appeal support the education and formation of future deacons for our Diocese.

- This year there are twenty-three men currently in Deacon Formation for our Diocese, with nine of these scheduled to be ordained in May of 2022. In addition, twelve men in formation are enrolled and paid for by the Dioceses of Madison and Superior.

Permanent deacons assist the Bishop and priests by their ministry of charity to those suffering or on the margins of society and through teaching, proclaiming the Gospel, assisting at the altar, and carrying out other apostolic works.

HISPANIC AND MIGRANT MINISTRY:

- Over 2000 people helped weekly

Many Spanish-speaking Catholics live and work in our Diocese. To meet their spiritual needs, the Church provides Mass and other liturgical and pastoral services in their native language and makes Spanish catechetical and devotional resources available. There are also a growing number of rallies, retreats, and pilgrimages for both youths and adults from the Hispanic community. The Office for Ministries and Social Concerns coordinates these pastoral efforts, complementing the legal and material aid provided to the Hispanic Community through Catholic Charities.

OFFICE FOR SACRED WORSHIP

The Office for Sacred Worship serves the Bishop, clergy, and laity of the Diocese and the goal of uniting all in Faith through the sacred liturgy. The Office for Sacred Worship seeks to deepen our understanding of the meaning of the celebrated rites, their manner of celebration, and their implications for daily life. It offers sacramental catechesis for all the Diocese members and promotes the liturgical formation of those who serve the liturgical assembly in the parish. The Office for Sacred Worship also directs the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) by supporting the activities of parish RCIA coordinators and hosting diocesan celebrations with the Bishop and the RCIA candidates.

TELEVISED MASS:

As in past years, the televised Mass provides tremendous comfort to those thousands of temporarily or permanently homebound Catholics, whose age or infirmity prevents them from going to their parish church for Mass by allowing them to be able to view the Sunday Mass in their home. When the COVID - 19 outbreak limited our ability to be a worshipping community, this ministry became even more vital to our spiritual and communal health, uniting homebound members of the Diocese with a more prominent Catholic family of Faith. Although many viewers of the televised Mass regularly contribute to help pay for production and airtime, the costs are much greater than the contributions. In addition, the Mass is closed-captioned for the hearing impaired.

OFFICE FOR SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The Diocese of La Crosse is committed to creating a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults entrusted to our care in our parishes and schools. The Office for Safe Environment oversees the training programs following the United States Council of Catholic Bishops Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

A safe environment is maintained by thoroughly screening and training all clergy members, employees, and volunteers who work with children and young people as part of their ministry. In addition, online and in-person educational programs and resource materials are used to educate those who work with our youth. Parent volunteers at diocesan schools and parish sites are also trained and screened.

Every student that attends one of the Catholic schools or Religious Education Programs is also given youth training.

Clergy, employees, and volunteers are annually trained to recognize and respond to signs of abuse and review reporting procedures to maintain an environment for children and vulnerable adults to learn and worship in a safe and welcoming place.

In 2019, more than 4,400 background checks and 1,270 fingerprint cards were submitted and ran for clergy, parish and school employees, and volunteers at the cost of over \$88,000. Background checks are renewed every three years. In addition, fingerprints are required of all clergy, paid staff, maintenance staff, and coaches.

The Safe Environment program follows the local audit required by the USCCB and the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

Creating and maintaining a safe environment is a priority for the parishes and schools of the Diocese of La Crosse. We strive to keep all God's children safe and protected while in our care.

PARISH SERVICES SUPPORT

CHANCERY AND ARCHIVES

The Chancery Office provides consultation in areas of Church (canon) law. The Chancellor is the chief notary for the Diocese and is responsible for safeguarding official Curial documents. The Chancellor's Office processes prenuptial files for marriage, including granting permissions, dispensations, and declarations of nullity due to lack of canonical form. The Chancery Office prepares and edits the data for inclusion in the *Wisconsin Pastoral Handbook* and *Official Catholic Directory*.

The Diocesan Archives maintains a history of the parishes and institutions within the Diocese. In addition, the Archivist provides research for genealogical searches from the sacramental registers and issues sacramental records from the data kept in the Archives.

OFFICE FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Office for Communications and Public Relations seeks to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ, according to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, to God's people of the Diocese of La Crosse. Daily, we

strive to present the truth and presence of God by promoting the efforts of the Diocese through her parishes, clergy, religious, and lay faithful using many forms of media and public relations.

The Office for Communications and Public Relations, responsible for communications to the Diocese's external and internal audiences, acts as the communications liaison with all the Diocesan parishes and maintains a relationship with similar offices of the other regional (arch) dioceses. The communications director, serving as the spokesperson and media contact, is responsible for public relations, promotion, photography, video production, and website communication. This individual also oversees the technical and database requirements necessary to maintain an effective electronic communications network.

CATHOLIC COMMUNICATIONS:

We regularly communicate the mission to the faithful of the Diocese of La Crosse to provide a meaningful Catholic perspective. In addition, through the help of the Diocesan Annual Appeal, we reach all families through our print publication *Catholic Life* and its companion website and social media presence. The two-part focus of our message is to inform and enrich those active in their Catholic Faith and to inspire and awaken those who are not.

OFFICE FOR STEWARDSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Taking heart of the call by our Bishops that "Once one chooses to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option," the Office for Stewardship and Development aims to educate and support the different Stewardship efforts within the diocesan's community. Christ reminds us that to be good and faithful stewards; we must take a risk with our gifts and not be foolish or timid. (Mt 25:14-30). Therefore, the Office for Stewardship and Development works to ensure the community has the necessary understanding, strategic planning, and tools to cultivate the Time, Talent, and Treasure required to walk with the people of God's on their journey to the compassionate heart of Lord Jesus Christ.

DIOCESAN ANNUAL APPEAL

The expenses incurred by the Diocesan Annual Appeal include salaries, promotion, printing, postage, video production, other supplies, and tools required.

PLANNED GIVING

We are leaving a legacy for generations to come. Our planned giving efforts are designed to instruct and provide methodologies for Catholics in our Diocese to support the mission of baptizing all the nations through their time on earth once their time here has passed. The tools we offer can save families hundreds of dollars in preplanning expenses and maximize the availability of funds to support one's final wishes.

ASSISTING PARISHES AND OTHER OFFICES IN THE CURIA

The Office of Stewardship and Development guides and assist parishes and other Offices with their fundraising needs. Whether through data analysis, strategic executions, or assisting with coordinating

campaigns, events, or appeals, we understand that there is no money without a mission. Without money, there is no mission.

OFFICE FOR TEMPORALITIES

The Finance Office, Diocesan Buildings and Grounds, Maintenance, Human Resources, and Holy Cross Center Maintenance Staff comprise the Office for Temporalities.

The Finance Office assists the parishes and answers questions on their financial, payroll, human resource, and accounting needs. In addition, the Office assists the Bishop in establishing the Diocesan benefit package, including health, dental, vision, life, disability, and 403b retirement plan. The Office for Buildings and Grounds helps the parishes and schools comply with governmental regulations by assisting asbestos and other environmental matters. In addition, this Office is the primary contact for the processing of construction and remodeling contracts.

LAY EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT

The Diocese of La Crosse Lay Employees' Retirement Plan needs additional support to fund fully the modest retirement benefits given to the employees enrolled in this defined-benefit plan. The plan began in 1974 to extend greater financial security to those many dedicated lay employees and their families by providing some financial assistance upon their retirement. The plan was frozen December 31, 2006, but there are 256 Active Employees, 418 Deferred Vested, and 966 receiving benefits from the plan

ST. JOSEPH THE WORKMAN CATHEDRAL OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE:

Dedicated in 1962, St. Joseph, the Workman Cathedral, is the Mother Church of the Diocese of La Crosse. Due to the Cathedral's role in diocesan celebrations and liturgies, the Diocese assumes responsibility for a portion of the expenses of the Mother Church of the Diocese.

HOLY CROSS DIOCESAN CENTER BUILDING OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE:

The Holy Cross Diocesan Center is a multi-functional facility that houses and maintains the day-to-day operations of the La Crosse Diocesan administration. Besides the Bishop's business offices and conference room, there are 99 rooms used by the Diocesan Curia and Catholic Charities administration. Catholic Charities runs a disabilities service program for both adults and adolescents in their other Center-space. In addition, to provide further assistance to vets, the Center for Veterans Affairs, which aids homeless vets, offices here. The top floor offers apartments and guest rooms for active and retired priests and occasional lodging for the Seminary House of Formation. The Center also houses Christ the King Chapel, St. Martha's Kitchen and Refectory, and a gym. In addition, the Center boasts its catering service by which it can now serve full meals for up to 100 individuals sponsored by the Center's clientele, in both formal and informal style. The Mater Redemptoris facility and the Bishop's residence are also on the same 23-acre campus. Finally, the Center provides a venue for large groups and diocesan-wide conferences and events, like those accommodated in the:

Refectory (Dining Room): that include daily staff lunch, Priest Unity Days, Fall Clergy Conference, donor receptions for the Diocesan Annual Appeal, Jubilee Wedding Anniversary celebrations, new teacher formation, and other Diocesan Catholic Schools in-services; school administrators' meetings, deacons' meetings, the annual Casa Hogar Dinner, Lenten Luncheon and seminars for Catholic Charities, Seminarian reunions, plus a host of other annual conferences sponsored by offices of the Diocesan Curia.

Bishop's Common Room: that facilitates meetings held by Deacon Community Board, Catholic Hospital Administrators, La Crosse Deanery Special Religious Education, Rural Life Committee, Presbyterial Council, the College of Deans, St. Joseph Priest Fund, Pastoral Planning Committee and Subcommittees, and Deacon Community Board meetings, Catholic Charities Board and others meetings, as well as things like bible studies, and Curia staff in-services.

Riverview Room: that has meetings held by Catechesis and Evangelization, Consecrated Life, Vocations, Safe Environment, Diocese and Viterbo Collaborative Committee, Catholic Cemeteries, Catholic Charities, St. Joseph Priest Fund, Youth Ministry, and NET teams. Occasional use by residents takes place here, convenient for the kitchen that is attached.

Christ the King Chapel: that is a backdrop for TV Mass filmed happens, and is a place for First Friday Masses, Masses for the Hmong, Hispanics and MPSN (Ministry for Persons with Special Needs), and other Masses of special events, as well as *daily* Curia staff Masses.

Holy Cross Diocesan Center Crypt Chapel provides a place for resident priests to celebrate daily Masses, with occasional retreats and days of recollection had by others.

Gym and on the Ball Fields: Aquinas High School, Western Technical College, a Catholic men's basketball league, and the Warriors Drum and Bugle Corps use these facilities. RUSH Wisconsin West practices soccer here too. In addition, Aquinas uses the ball fields during respective seasons for baseball and football, for practices and games.

A full-size maintenance engineer's home is attached to a steam heating plant – that is all separate from but dependent upon the central facility.

The Center also supports the local community upon request. Presently it is collaborating with the Western Healthcare Coalition of the State of Wisconsin as part of a mass fatality plan to provide a safe harbor for affected families needing assistance.

Finally, it is essential to remember the natural habitat. Nestled on the shores of the Mississippi, the Center provides lush and beautifully manicured grounds where countless forms of wildlife seek refuge. Turtles find safety to lay their young, away from endangering automobile traffic; deer and fox, raccoon and beaver, look up

to watch raptors of every kind, all within earshot of a vast choir of songbirds that nest in its trees. Countless hours of maintenance service are required to keep all of this in check.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION

OFFICE FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Office for Catholic Schools assists the Bishop in planning, implementing, and evaluating the 65 Catholic education programs in Diocesan Parish Schools and Unified School Systems. In addition, it conducts major workshops and in-service training for teachers, administrators, parents, and other groups. The Office also informs schools of national and state education policies, standards, and issues; administers a standardized Religion testing program; provides curriculum assistance; and assists schools by offering guidance on legal matters and other pressing issues. Most importantly, the Office for Catholic Schools helps to assure the Catholic identity of schools and the spiritual formation of administrators and teachers.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS DEVELOPMENT:

6,403 students in Catholic schools (2020-21)

Capital, infrastructure, and academic development are vital to ensuring that students in our Diocese will continue to receive a quality Catholic education. Therefore, funds are used to provide training and assistance to improve our 65 Catholic schools.

DIRECT PARISH SUBSIDY FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS:

GRANTS TO PARISHES THAT SUPPORT SCHOOLS

The Diocese of La Crosse takes pride in the strong tradition of quality Catholic education. But, unfortunately, parishes that support schools frequently must forego important projects and purchases to meet the financial needs of their schools.

TUITION ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN OUR SCHOOLS

There are annual tuition-assistance grants awarded to families based on financial need. In the 2020-21 school year, \$110,000.00 was allocated from the Diocesan Annual Appeal to help families keep their children in our Catholic schools.

CHARITY, MISSIONS, AND THE WIDER CHURCH

CATHOLIC CHARITIES:

Catholic Charities' mission is to proclaim Christ's Gospel of life and promote human dignity by alleviating poverty and strengthening individuals and families. Catholic Charities receives a portion of their annual budget through the Diocesan Annual Appeal. These funds assist them in working with individuals, families, and communities to help them meet their needs, address their issues, eliminate oppression, and build a just and compassionate society. In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic,

Catholic Charities faced many new challenges in providing services. However, they offer various services on a no-fee or very low fee basis to all who reached out to us for help with your support. Your gifts to the Diocesan Annual Appeal support their:

ST. LAWRENCE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Catholic Charities certified and experienced staff provides charitable outreach, including assistance with rent, mortgage, food, utilities, advocacy, and financial education and enrichment individually tailored to each client. As a result, struggling families and individuals can receive an evaluation of their situation, develop a plan, and participate in financial literacy and case management. Over \$589,000 in financial assistance and charitable outreach was provided for utility, food, transportation, health-related issues, housing, clothing, and other basic human needs.

DISASTER RECOVERY

Catholic Charities provides disaster relief and recovery services throughout the Diocese. In 2020, flooding and other natural disasters hit many of our communities within the Diocese of La Crosse. Catholic Charities was there to help them through the process and offer assistance. They were able to provide over \$40,000 in financial assistance and charitable outreach. Community members needing assistance could contact us through our Disaster Recovery Helpline and receive assistance from St. Lawrence Financial Wellness Advocates available to provide financial assistance and professional help with resources.

REPRESENTATIVE PAYEE PROGRAM

- Over 400 clients annually throughout the southwestern part of the Diocese received assistance.

This program offers case management services to individuals who are living on a fixed income. Assistance with payment of financial obligations and monthly household budgeting are among the services provided in this program. In addition, payments for monthly needs, such as rent, utilities, groceries, and other personal necessities, were provided.

COMMUNITY HOMELESS FACILITIES

- Over 26,000 sheltered nights of service were provided to the many poor, hurting, homeless, and often "faceless" people in our communities.
- Due to COVID 19, Catholic Charities Eau Claire Sojourner House, the La Crosse Warming Center, and the Wausau Warming Center all had to find new locations and extend service hours to provide "Safe At Home" facilities for those who did not have a home.

What had once been overnight services extended to 24/7. Our St. Lawrence Services Program, with the help of community resources, volunteers, and donors, jumped in and helped house as many of our guests as possible. We would find ourselves moving each location again throughout the pandemic, offering daytime services, expanding current services, and increasing our collaborative community efforts.

Catholic Charities provides overnight shelter facilities for many poor, hurting, homeless, and often "faceless" people in our communities. Sojourner House in Eau Claire first opened its doors on November 1, 2011, to provide a year-round, safe, clean place where adult men and women, regardless of their ambitions or hopes. In 2021, we were able to move back into our original location. However, we realized future expansion would be needed moving forward to provide our guests with a place to sleep overnight, shower, clean their clothes, have food in the evening, and nutritious breakfast while ensuring their respect and safety.

In 2020, the La Crosse and Wausau Warming Centers were open from November 1 through May 30. In March 2020, we expanded our services and provided 24/7 services. In addition, we offered a warm space, three meals, and laundry and shower facilities to homeless adults 18 and over who may have been turned away from other local programs due to capacity or eligibility issues. Before closing their doors for the 2020 season, they worked to find housing for many of our guests.

BEYOND SHELTER PROGRAM

In 2016, Catholic Charities embraced a long-term housing program for homeless men and women in our Diocese. In Wausau, the first Beyond Shelter facility opened to house single homeless men, and with the support of the community, it has grown to three homes. The House of Mercy, located in Loyal, soon followed, serving homeless women and children in Clark County. In 2018, they received funding to open a Beyond Shelter Home in La Crosse. These facilities offer housing to those who are in need in our communities. They work with these residents by providing them a home with case supervision. The staff is available to connect them with local resources and work with them on overcoming their barriers to a more sustainable living situation.

FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAM

- Finds families forever through their birth parent, relative, and international adoption programs. Seventy-one families received adoption finalizations in 2020.
- Is currently the only Hague Accredited Adoption Agency for international adoptions in the state of Wisconsin.

- Supports Birth parents through pregnancy to live birth with a free, confidential helpline available 24/7.
- Provides families enjoy family fun events, conferences, training, or received information from their Post-Adoption Resource Center.

Catholic Charities offers compassionate, free support to expectant birth mothers and fathers in all areas of the Diocese, whether they choose to parent their baby or make an adoption plan. This outreach helps fulfill their mission to proclaim the sanctity of human life to promote families and the capacity of individuals to grow in the community. For almost 150 years, Catholic Charities Adoption services have been building families throughout west-central Wisconsin.

IMMIGRATION ASSISTANCE

- In 2020, their Immigration staff provided services to 148 immigrants from 23 different countries throughout southwest Wisconsin. In addition, Catholic Charities provided a voice for those without a voice.

Catholic Charities Immigration Program focuses on family and humanitarian-based immigration services and assists those needing assistance across the Diocese. This program is recognized by the United States Board of Immigration Appeals and has board-accredited staff members. Their Immigration program also provides client access through a contracted Immigration Attorney.

Catholic Charities provides direct legal assistance to immigrants for naturalization, adjustment of status, immigration services under the VAWA program (Violence Against Women Act), and other immigration services. Also, they provide all immigrants with general assistance and referrals for individual needs.

DISABILITIES SERVICES

- Over 23,000 staffing hours focused on individual dignity and strengthening families for those dealing with developmental and emotional disabilities and mental health and substance abuse concerns. These services were provided to students with behavioral disorders, autism spectrum, and other developmental disabilities to help them be successful in school. The program's primary purpose is to provide parents, caregivers, or school personnel quality services needed to prevent out-of-home placements of participants with developmental disabilities.

The various program services include an Adult Support Program, School Support Services, and After School Support Services. Catholic Charities also collaborates with Bridges of Belonging and provides program supervision/support to The Dwelling Place. The Dwelling Place is a Christian-based home that serves four adult residents living with developmental disabilities.

The Live By Program is another Disability Services Program that continued to see growth through 2020. The Live By is a place for people in recovery and is a collaboration between Catholic Charities and La Crosse County. Individuals with mental health and substance use issues are provided a safe and sober living environment while on the path to full independence. Individuals pay low-income-based rent and are provided a room to themselves with shared common areas such as the kitchen and living room to socialize with other tenants. Tenants have the opportunity to gain positive rental history for future housing. The Live By is a stepping stone for individuals to achieve housing of their own with the confidence that they can independently live once they've acquired the proper skills to do so.

ST. DAMIEN OUTREACH TO PERSONS WITH HIV/AIDS

- Pastoral care and practical support from Catholic Charities staff and volunteers.

The purpose of the St. Damien Outreach is to provide compassionate ongoing support and outreach to affected people living with HIV/AIDS and those who love them. Catholic Charities engages in this program to fulfill their mission to protect human rights and dignity, proclaim the sanctity of human life, and stand in solidarity with those who may be marginalized by society.

VOLUNTEERS ACROSS THE DIOCESE

- Even during COVID-19, we still had 793 dedicated volunteers who provided 26,250 hours of service through various programs and offices across the Diocese to assist Catholic Charities in offering help and hope.

Many Catholic Charities programs and projects are dependent on the generosity of volunteers. Even when they had to comply with 24/7 care in each Community Homeless facility, volunteers helped keep their doors open. This could not have been done without regular volunteers coming in to assist our staff and guests. They are thankful to the men and women who contribute time and engage in the efforts to serve those in need across our Diocese.

SUPPORT OF THE WIDER CHURCH:

As Catholics, we belong to a Church much more extensive than our parish or Diocese. Catholics in the Diocese of La Crosse are committed to supporting the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Holy See.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS:

The Diocesan Annual Appeal has reduced the number of collections taken up in our parishes by funding eleven special collections. These eleven collections are:

- Collection for Aid for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe (CCEE)
- Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
- Black and Indian Missions
- Catholic Communications Campaign (CCC)
- Catholic Home Missions Appeal (CHMA)
- Catholic University of America
- The Diocese of La Crosse Home Missions,
 - Casa Hogar orphanage in Peru
- Diocesan Social Ministries
- Pontifical Good Friday Collections for the Holy Land
- Collection for the Church in Latin America (CLA)
- Peter's Pence Collection

WORKS OF CHARITY:

Natural disasters and personal tragedies are examples of situations that often require immediate assistance. Through this fund, the Diocese assists state and national Catholic apostolates that depend on charitable gifts for their survival. The Diocese of La Crosse has a policy that will not allow the use of parish, general diocesan funds, or funds designated for specific apostolates for payment on clergy sexual misconduct claims. However, the Works of Charity Fund has occasionally and appropriately provided funds for the treatment and care of victims of such sinful misconduct as they seek to heal.

For further information on this case statement or any additional questions regarding the Diocesan Annual Appeal, please feel free to contact:

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Visit our website at <http://diolc.org/stewardship>