



2023-2024
DIOCESAN ANNUAL APPEAL

Case Statement

OCTOBER 1, 2023



2023-2024 CASE STATEMENT

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Diocesan Annual Appeal

CASE STATEMENT 2023-2024



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, and 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 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

- 12 seminarians
- 7 participants in the Journey program

Spiritually and financially responsible for providing priests for the Diocese of La Crosse belongs to all of us. There are 12 men engaged in seminary studies for our Diocese at college and theological seminaries for the 2023-2024 school year. We also have five men in the Journey Program from our Diocese.

The House of Formation includes the Journey program, which helps 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 the funds are used for tuition and formation fees for the 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 vocational portions of confirmation retreats and parish programs for middle school children and adults.

VICAR FOR CLERGY:

The Vicar for Clergy oversees the health and well-being of 98 Active Diocesan priests, 28 International Priests, and, in cooperation with the Vicar for Senior Clergy, 27 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 our international priests' training and support for service in the Diocese of La Crosse parishes. 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 administering our parishes.

CLERGY HEALTHCARE:

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

OFFICE FOR THE DIACONATE:

OFFICE FOR THE DIACONATE:

The Office for the Diaconate oversees the 70 Deacons of the Diocese and those men in formation.

- 20 men are in Deacon Formation
- 9 Deacons were ordained in 2022.
- 5 Men may be ordained in the Spring of 2024, God willing.
- 60 Deacons in active ministry

These funds are for the education and formation of future deacons for our Diocese and our current deacons' continuing education and support. Deacons assist the Bishop and priests through 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 every person encounter Jesus Christ and develop a more profound friendship with Him. The Office serves parish and school staff and lay faithful in our life-long formation process in seeking to be faithful disciples of Christ and His Church through committed reception of the Sacraments, daily prayer, and actively participating in their parish community. The Office offers authentic Catholic resources and assists clergy, parishes, and schools to provide in-services with Christ-centered, Catholic content at the diocesan, deanery, and parish levels. This Office also affords and oversees opportunities for certification for Catholic school teachers, parish directors, and catechists in doctrine, Scripture, Catholic spirituality, and methods to equip them to teach the Catholic Faith correctly and in an evangelizing manner – that fosters the encounter with Jesus Christ. Evangelization resources are developed, in an ongoing way, at the request of parish leaders and school personnel that are stand-alone materials or correspond to noted Bible studies and Adult Study Programs. This Office coordinates the Hmong Ministry and Ministry for Persons with Special Needs (MPSN).

This Office collaborates with other Diocesan offices to provide training in evangelization for men in Diaconate formation and the Lay Formation Institute, as well as for facilitators in the RCIA process.

The Office for Catechesis and Evangelization maintains a resource library with free rentals for parishes and Catholic schools. In addition, 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, followed by an application task to accommodate the busy person. The workshops are geared toward parents, teachers, parish leaders, an RCIA team, those in leadership roles, and 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. Further, the Diocesan Coordinator in La Crosse serves Hmong Catholics. Our Hmong brothers and sisters receive instruction in the faith and ongoing formation to help them become authentic disciples and 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 to those who have never heard of Jesus Christ. Booklets of the Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, and Stations of the Cross have been translated into Hmong to foster a deeper relationship of Hmong Catholics with Christ through prayer.

There continues to be 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. that began with the outbreak of COVID-19. In addition, many young Hmong Catholics are encouraged to participate in parish youth ministry to grow their faith. Your gift also provides tuition assistance to needy Hmong families who have 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 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 as possible to journey with us, as those being ministered to and 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 For Catechesis and Evangelization, we offer training to parish ministers for Baptism preparation.
- Men's Ministry 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 provides resources to separated couples (e.g., Retrouvaille, Catholic Counselors, Marriage Mentors, etc.) and invites divorced people to stay connected with their Church and explore a declaration of nullity.
- The Ministry of Consolation trains deaneries and parishes to support families and individuals during loss.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION:

The Office for Family Life works to collaborate and empower 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. Trainers from within the Diocese offer Natural Family Planning instruction. 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 various 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
- Diocesan Confirmation Retreats
- 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 young people in the life of the Church by helping them see that 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 the formation of the permanent diaconate and various formation programs for the laity, including the Lay Formation Institute and the Leader of Prayer Program. It coordinates pastoral care of the Hispanic community, implements the Diocesan Bishop's directives consistent with the Church's social teachings, 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, Sacred Worship, Catholic Schools, and Family Life on common goals. A current focus has been on the three-year National Eucharistic Revival. We have developed a website (diolc.org/eucharist) and various articles and resources to help deepen Eucharistic awareness and fervor among the faithful. We are making plans to equip them to evangelize their neighbors.
- We have also focused on Pope St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body, seeking to integrate its teaching on the nature, dignity, and vocation of the human person into human and religious formation at all levels. The goal is to form young people, as well as adults, in knowing the truth about human sexuality, respect for life, and love of neighbor, and how it all relates to being a disciple of Christ, created in the image of God.
- Another joint effort has been the implementation of the Franciscan at Home Online Learning Program, with its vast array of workshops for forming teachers, catechists, youth ministers, RCIA team members, liturgy coordinators, social ministry and respect life advocates, etc.
- Finally, the Office for Ministries and Social Concerns is collaborating with the Office for Catholic Schools on a brief curriculum module on "Why We're Pro-Life." This year, a question-and-answer/discussion format will be implemented in our Catholic high schools using this resource, produced by Catholic Answers Press, to assist students in critical thinking about the dignity of human life in the womb.

DEACON FORMATION:

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

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

Permanent deacons assist the bishops and priests through 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.

LAY FORMATION:

- We have twenty-six students in their first year of the two-year Lay Formation Institute (more than 870 commissioned since 1973).
- Seventeen new Leaders of Prayer were commissioned in August of 2023 (close to 400 have been commissioned since 1989).

HISPANIC AND MIGRANT MINISTRY:

- Over 2,000 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 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 to unite 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 people who are hard of hearing.

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 a 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

MISSION STATEMENT

Facilitate Encounters with Christ

VISION STATEMENT

A diocese where Christ's message is communicated clearly, effectively, and precisely.

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

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 is the spokesperson and media contact responsible for all facets of public relations, promotion, photography, video production, print publication, and website communication. This individual also oversees the technical and database requirements to maintain an effective electronic communications network.

CATHOLIC COMMUNICATIONS:

We regularly communicate the mission to the Diocese of La Crosse faithful 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 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 attending one Catholic school or Religious Education Program 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, the office submitted more than 4,400 background checks and 1,270 fingerprint cards and ran for clergy, parish and school employees, and volunteers for over \$88,000. Background checks are renewed every three years, which includes fingerprinting 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.

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 on their journey to the compassionate heart of the 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 assists parishes and other Offices with their fundraising needs. Whether through data analysis, strategic executions, or assisting with coordinating campaigns, events, or appeals, we understand there is no money without a mission. Without money, there is no mission.

OFFICE FOR TEMPORALITIES

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

The Office for Temporalities assists parishes with financial, payroll, human resource, and accounting needs. In addition, the Office assists the Bishop in establishing the Diocesan benefit package, including group health, dental, vision, life, disability, and 403(b) retirement plan. The Office for Buildings and Grounds assists parishes and schools in complying with governmental regulations regarding asbestos abatement and other environmental matters. In addition, this Office is the primary contact for processing construction and remodeling contracts.

LAY EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT

The Diocese of La Crosse Lay Employees' Retirement Plan needs additional support to fully fund 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 on 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 some 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 Administrative Offices of the Diocesan Curia. Besides the Bishop's business offices and conference rooms, there are 99 other rooms used by the Diocesan Curia and Catholic Charities administration. Catholic Charities runs a disabilities service program for adults and adolescents in their center space. In addition, to provide further assistance to veterans, 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 gymnasium. In addition, the Center provides catering services by which it can now serve full meals for up to 100 individuals sponsored by its 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): This includes daily resident priest 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 the Administrative Offices of the Diocesan Curia.

Bishop's Common Room: This facilitates meetings held by Catholic Hospital Administrators, La Crosse Deanery Special Religious Education, Rural Life Committee, Presbyteral Council, the College of Deans, St. Joseph's Priest Fund, Pastoral Planning Committee, and Subcommittees, Deacon Community Board, Catholic Charities Board, and others meetings, as well as activities such as 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's Priest Fund, Family Life, and NET teams. Occasional use by residents occurs here, made convenient by the adjacent kitchen.

Christ the King Chapel: This is a backdrop for filmed TV Masses 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 held by others.

Gymnasium and 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 practices and games.

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

The Center also supports the local community upon request. It is collaborating with the Western Healthcare Coalition of the State of Wisconsin as part of a mass casualty 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 eggs, away from endangering automobile traffic, deer, fox, raccoon, beaver, and raptors of every kind, all within earshot of a vast choir of songbirds nesting 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 64 Catholic education programs in Diocesan Parish Schools and Unified Catholic 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 problems. Most importantly, the Office for Catholic Schools helps assure schools' Catholic identity and the spiritual formation of administrators and teachers.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS DEVELOPMENT:

6,710 students in Catholic schools (2021-22)

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 64 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. 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 2021-22 school year, \$102,603.55 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 2022, due to the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ever-increasing cost of living affecting all Americans, Catholic Charities experienced increased demand for their services. However, they continued to offer various services on a no-fee or very low-fee basis to all who reached out for help. Gifts to the Diocesan Annual Appeal support them:

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. In 2022, over \$271,551 in financial assistance and charitable outreach was provided for utility, food, transportation, health-related issues, housing, clothing, and other basic human needs for 1,164 individuals.

REPRESENTATIVE PAYEE PROGRAM

- Over 400 clients annually throughout the Diocese received assistance.

This program offers case management services to individuals 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 in 2022.

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 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 have a nutritious breakfast while ensuring their respect and safety. In 2022, we embarked on an ambitious building project at the Sojourner House to increase the comfort of our guests and provide them access to more services in the greater community. In 2023, we finished our renovations at Sojourner.

In 2023, our Wausau Warming Center moved into the new Community Partners Campus and transitioned to a 365-day-a-year facility. With these increased services came a rebranding of the facility, now known as the Good Shephard Shelter. The La Crosse Warming Centers remain open from November 1 through May 30. Our facilities offer a warm or cool 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. We also focus on providing these guests access to our other programs.

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 community's support, it has grown to three homes. The House of Mercy in Loyal soon followed, serving homeless women and children in Clark County. 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 with a home with case supervision. The staff can connect them with local resources and work with them to overcome barriers to a more sustainable living situation. In 2023, we are excited to add more homes for families and individuals in our community experiencing specific needs.

FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAM

- Finds families forever through their birth parent, relative, and international adoption programs. Ninety-five families received adoption finalizations in 2022.

- It is currently the only Hague Accredited Adoption Agency for international adoptions in Wisconsin.
- Supports Birth parents through pregnancy to live birth with a free, confidential helpline available 24/7.
- Families enjoy fun events, conferences, and training or receive 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 2022, their Immigration staff provided services to 153 immigrants from many different countries throughout 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. We also continue to support our Afghan families in this country with housing and other necessities.

DISABILITIES SERVICES

- Over 23,000 staffing hours focused on individual dignity and strengthening families for those 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 with quality services 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 serving four adult residents with developmental disabilities.

The Live by Program is another Disability Services Program that grew through 2023. 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 private room with shared common areas, such as the kitchen and living room, to socialize with other tenants. Tenants have the opportunity to gain a positive rental history for future housing. The Live By is a stepping stone for individuals to achieve their housing with the confidence that they can independently live once they've acquired the proper skills.

VOLUNTEERS ACROSS THE DIOCESE

- In 2022, 631 dedicated volunteers provided 16,620 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 assisting 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:

Catholics 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 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,
 - Father Joseph Walijewski Legacy Guild
 - Beatification
 - 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 who depend on charitable gifts for survival. The Diocese of La Crosse has 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 treating and caring for victims of 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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PO Box 4004, La Crosse, WI 54602-4004
608-791-2653

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