

In the Heartland With Bishop Pates

Sharing God's Gifts Paying Dividends

As the Diocese of Des Moines Capital Campaign, **Sharing God's Gifts**, reaches its conclusion, the sentiment that fills my heart is gratitude. I am enormously thankful to the members of the diocese as 41 million dollars plus was committed far exceeding the goal of 30 million dollars. Again, **THANK YOU FOR YOUR REMARKABLE GENEROSITY.**

As the pledges begin to be paid, debt is reduced in our parishes, many deferred physical plant projects are undertaken and endowments are initiated or increased. All of this material activity translates into increased pastoral and spiritual outreach strengthening the efforts to fulfill our mission.

On the diocesan level, we are able to boost our priests' pension program, add to the funds which support medical assistance for our priests and pay the costs for an ever increasing number of seminarians – which number currently stands at 21.

What especially excites me, however, are the initiatives related to our seniors, our outreach to Catholic Schools and ministry to college-aged and young adult students. A project which stirs special hope is "School of Faith" due to be introduced for all of our some 460 Catholic School teachers this fall.

In terms of our high schools the ½ million dollar grant to Dowling Catholic High School is targeted to assist with the building of a new chapel which will be the signature facility on campus and contribute to the Catholic identity of this exceptionally fine institution. It is anticipated that ground breaking for the new structure will occur this spring.

A grant in equal amount to St. Albert Catholic Schools in Council Bluffs will be applied to debt reduction. St. Albert undertook a major building project some five years ago at a cost of approximately eight million dollars. The assistance from Sharing God's gifts will nearly complete paying for the beautiful structure and come close to eliminating debt.

The money being allocated for the St. Thomas More Center will be utilized for plant updating. The center sponsors the popular Catholic Youth Camp in summer and conducts retreats for students and other groups for the remainder of the year. Under the direction of its new executive director, Chris Wadle, it is proving to be a valuable resource for both youth and adult activity.

One priority of the Diocese of Des Moines is ministry to college men and women and young adults. A portion of the proceeds from this campaign will help solidify outreach to

all the campuses of higher learning in the Diocesan ministry which these young people genuinely desire.

A program which is particularly extensive and which will benefit a large contingent of diocesan teachers is that known as “School of Faith.”

Last academic year, I visited our 17 Catholic Schools all of which at one time had been administered and staffed by religious communities of women or priests. These schools were the beneficiaries of the “formation” which the priests and nuns underwent in the course of the development of their religious vocations.

Our schools today are almost entirely in the hands of lay people – who do marvelous work. At the same time, in the course of reflection during my visits to the schools, it was realized that the value of the teachers’ growth in the faith not only in information (catechesis) but in formation (evangelization) would be valuable for them not only personally but also professionally in their role as a Catholic school teacher.

A program known as “School of Faith” has been underway for a number of years in the Archdiocese of Kansas City which seeks to provide the development oriented to the needs of our teachers. St. Albert Schools in Council Bluffs has been piloting the program for its teachers this school year.

The St. Albert experience has been followed by a representative group from our Catholic schools and a decision was reached to provide this benefit to our teachers system-wide next school year. The biggest hurdle to doing so was financial. But through the Excellence in Education Fund supported by “Sharing God’s Gifts” sufficient resources were identified to enable the program’s launching in the 2014-15 school year.

While we are committed to having outstanding schools – strong in academics, extracurricular activities and community building, we are especially dedicated to their Catholic character. Accordingly, we are most grateful that resources are available to undertake a project of this magnitude which I am confident will reap rich harvests in the years to come. Again, heartfelt thanks to the volunteers and donors who are enabling us to “Share God’s Gifts.”