

Financial statements available online again this year

By FRANZ KLEIN
Catholic Times Correspondent

LA CROSSE – The Diocese of La Crosse recently released its audited financial statements for the 2010-11 fiscal year. For the second year in a row, the diocese will not be publishing summary information in the print version of *The Catholic Times* due to cost-saving measures and space considerations.

But Sondra Rieder, the diocesan finance officer, emphasized that the statements and accompanying “Frequently Asked Questions” documents are available online in their entirety or by mail to anybody who requests them.

“The diocese remains committed to transparency and openness in regard to its financial data,” Rieder wrote in a statement. “The Internet allows us to share our financial information with all the parishioners and donors who support the Diocese of La Crosse so they know how their money is being spent.”

Rieder noted that there are two sets of financial statements this year because St. Ambrose Financial Services, Inc. was formed as a legal corporation on Dec. 31, 2010, to perform financial and insurance-related administrative services for the diocesan administrative offices, as well as the diocese’s unified Catholic school systems and its parishes. The assets, liabilities and net assets of the deposit and loan fund were transferred to St. Ambrose Financial Services on March 31. St. Ambrose Finan-

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CT/Sharon Sliwka

Don Vanderhoff (below) and Richard Cadmus, of Vanderhoff Stained Glass Studio, Melrose, lower a stained glass panel from a window at Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Independence, on Dec. 12. The window is the first of 33 stained glass windows to be restored in the historic structure that was built in 1895. The Church Restoration Committee began an “Adopt a Window” campaign in August and is looking for families, individuals and businesses to adopt and fund the restoration.

New light for 116-year-old stained glass windows

By SHARON SLIWKA
Catholic Times Correspondent

INDEPENDENCE – It was 116 years ago that Polish settlers constructed what is now the second largest Catholic Church in the Diocese of La Crosse. Since that time, 33 massive stained glass windows at Ss. Peter and

Paul Church in Independence have endured nature’s elements, lasting well beyond the 75-100 year life expectancy before restoration is needed.

With deterioration threatening extensive damage, renovations could no longer be delayed. The glass restoration re-leading process began on Dec.



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Father Woodrow Pace, pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Independence and St. John the Apostle Parish in Whitehall, and Carol Gross, daughter of the late Joseph and Cora Symicek of La Crosse, hold the center rose piece of the first stained glass window being restored at Ss. Peter and Paul Parish. Restoration began on Dec. 12 with an endowment from the Symicek estate.

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‘Educating Young People in Justice and Peace’

By CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – When young people recognize the dignity and beauty of every human life, including their own, and are supported in their natural desire to make the world a better place, they become agents of justice and peace in the world, Pope Benedict XVI said.

Peace and justice are built on “a profound respect for every human being and helping others to live a life consonant with this supreme dignity,” the pope said in his message for the World Day of Peace 2012.

The Catholic Church celebrates World Day of Peace Jan. 1. The pope’s message for the occasion was released Dec. 16 at the Vatican and sent, through Vatican ambassadors, to the leaders of nations around the world.

The theme the pope chose for the 2012 celebration was “Educating Young People in Justice and Peace.”

He asked parents and teachers to be more attentive to the hopes and fears of young people today and to their search for true values, and he asked governments to put more resources into education and job creation.

And the pope asked young people themselves to take their schooling seriously and to be open to the example and knowledge their elders have to share.

He asked them “to be patient and persevering in seeking justice and peace, in cultivating the taste for what is just and true, even when it involves sacrifice and swimming against the tide.”

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Year in review

We take a look backwards at some of the images from 2011 that helped tell the stories in the pages of *The Catholic Times*, see page 8-9.



Putting down the pen

After appearing for more than two decades in diocesan newspaper, Father Thomas Smith is retiring his “God’s Word for Sunday” column, see pages 14-15.

Windows to get like-new treatment

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largest windows.

When the church was constructed in 1895, all the stained glass windows cost \$750. Today, it would cost millions to purchase them new, according to Father Pace.

To cover the cost, Ss. Peter and Paul Church Restoration Committee began an "Adopt a Window" campaign in August, and are currently asking families, individuals and businesses to adopt and fund the restoration of a window. Two windows, including the one currently under renovation, have committed donors.

Father Pace believes a significant part of maintaining not only the stained glass windows in Ss. Peter and Paul Church, but all Catholic Church buildings are endowments and will bequests. The Church has "family values and strong community – the Church is almost like one of the children that you leave a certain amount to," he said.

Joseph and Cora Symicek are examples of the will bequests Father Pace refers to. They requested a portion of their estate be donated to the church of which they had such fond memories. Cora Symicek died Oct. 2010, and Joseph Symicek died May 2011. Their donation is funding the restoration of the first stained glass window. Joseph Symicek was born and raised in Independence before he and his wife moved



CT/Sharon Sliwka

Kris Flury teaches her third grade-class at Ss. Peter and Paul Elementary School about stained glass artwork and its history within the Catholic Church. A replica of the first window under renovation will be colored by students and hang over the temporary foam insulation board, until the restored window is installed in February.

to La Crosse.

Symicek's daughter, Carol Gross, watched as the window was removed. "I know this is something my dad wished – that more families would climb aboard to renovate the church and bring it back to its full beauty," she said. Gross believes that as family members, when we hear our parents talk about making a request, "it's our obligation to follow through."

Students from Ss. Peter and Paul Elementary School observed the window removal and learned about stained glass from Barbara Vanderhoff. Father

Pace relayed the importance that students understand stained glass art within the Catholic Church. "The children are going to be the next generation, clearly not just with the care of the building, but the practice of the faith," he said.

A rubbing of the first window will be done by Vanderhoff Stained Glass Studios and given to the school. Art teacher Amy Kulig will supervise the students as they color the rubbing, just as they would a coloring book, and it will hang as a replica over the temporary foam insulation board, until the original

window is restored and returned to the church.

Vanderhoff Stained Glass Studios, owned by Don and Barbara Vanderhoff, was awarded the renovation project after bidding against four other companies. Don Vanderhoff has been performing stained glass window repairs for 34 years. They cover a six state region, have three employees and all their projects are religious based. Don and Barbara Vanderhoff take pride in the personal touch their small company provides.

According to Barbara Vanderhoff, it would be impossible to replace the 33 stained glass windows in Ss. Peter and Paul Church because of the original glass type and artistry. "Nowadays those artists just aren't available," she said.

Once stained glass windows reach their life expectancy, they have a tendency to bow and sag, causing the lead joints that hold the individual pieces of glass together to weaken and crack, and glass to break. The releading process consists of removing each panel from its frame, cleaning the individual pieces of glass, repairing or replacing cracked or damaged glass, rebuilding the window with new lead to hold each piece in place, cementing the window, installing new support rods and then installing the window back into its frame.

Stained glass window failure is usually caused by heat and oxidation. Heat causes the win-

dow components to expand and contract. Moisture dissolves the lead, replaces the oils that make cement strong and rots and rusts window frames. The window loses its structural integrity, and eventually becomes incapable of supporting its own weight.

Don Vanderhoff said the most difficult part of the process is removing the window without breaking it. "It's a satisfaction to stand back and look at something like this when I'm all done, knowing it's going to be here for 100 years – a long time after I'm gone," he said.

The Church Restoration Committee heads the entire restoration project for the building. The window campaign is only a part of restorations needed, according to committee chair, Bill Baxa. Plaster repairs, electrical, lighting, insulation and painting are just some of the updates needed to restore the church.

Baxa said, "People say it's a tough time to ask for large sum donation. Well, it's never a good time. When they built this church in 1895, it probably wasn't a good time then. They made sacrifices that hurt. That's what we're going to need to do."

Baxa asks that anyone interested in donating toward the restoration project, to help preserve the historic church, should contact the parish at 715-985-2227.

Financial data available online

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cial Services administers the deposit and loan fund which contains the segregated savings of each parish and unified Catholic school system – and provides low-interest loans to parishes and other diocesan institutions in the Diocese of La Crosse. A revolving loan was also established between St. Ambrose and the diocesan administrative offices at that time.

These funds are and always have been assets belonging to each incorporated parish and unified Catholic school system and are not assets belonging to the Diocese of La Crosse.

To view each of the financial statements, visit www.stambrosefinancial.com or request a paper copy by writing to President, St. Ambrose Financial Services, Inc., PO Box 4004, La Crosse, WI 64602-4004. There will also be a link to the statements at the *Catholic Times* Web site, www.catholic-timeslacrosse.com.

Pope offers World Day of Peace message

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Adults have a serious responsibility to help the young fulfill their potential, not just by sharing information with them, but by being examples of what it means to live lives marked by the joy of faith, charity and respect for others, he said.

"Today more than ever we need authentic witnesses, and not simply people who parcel out rules and facts: We need witnesses capable of seeing farther than others because their life is so much broader," the pope said.

Educating people in justice and peace begins in the family, where they learn to value the gift of life, solidarity, respect for rules, forgiveness and hospitality, he said.

Too many young people today are missing that basic human formation because "we are living in a world where families,

and life itself, are constantly threatened and not infrequently fragmented," he said.

Pope Benedict appealed to parents to give their children "the most precious of treasures," which is the gift of their time.

Presenting the message at a Vatican news conference, Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said the pope's message highlights the fact that he sees young people not only as hope for the future, but as "an active part, the most vital part of the human family" in a world that needs energy and new ideas now.

Bishop Mario Toso, secretary of the justice and peace council, said the young people who energized the Arab Spring movements toward democracy this year illustrate the fact that the young have a positive role to play in society today.

They proclaimed to the world that "there can be social justice in their societies if there is democracy and, vice versa, that if there is democracy, there can be social justice," he said.

The heart of the pope's message focused on what he called the "integral formation of the person, including the moral and spiritual dimension."

"Man is a being who bears within his heart a thirst for truth – a truth which is not partial, but capable of explaining life's meaning – since he was created in the image and likeness of God," the pope wrote in his message.

Acknowledging God as creator leads to recognizing "one's own profound dignity and the inviolability of every single person," Pope Benedict said.

Based on that dignity, people come to understand that there are certain things that always are either right or wrong,

he said.

"Deep within his conscience, man discovers a law that he did not lay upon himself, but which he must obey. Its voice calls him to love and do what is good, to avoid evil and to take responsibility for the good he does and the evil he commits," the pope said.

Pope Benedict said peace is not simply a gift to be received from God, it is a task people of good will must undertake.

"In order to be true peacemakers, we must educate ourselves in compassion, solidarity, working together, fraternity, in being active within the community and concerned to raise awareness about national and international issues and the importance of seeking adequate mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth, the promotion of growth, cooperation for development and conflict resolution," he said.