

OUR CAMPAIGN FOR

THE CHURCH ALIVE!

FOR ONE CHURCH *Alive* IN SIX COUNTIES

GOOD WORKS

An Impact Report to Donors – Spring 2015

YOUR GIFT HELPING TO HEAL

The decision of **Bishop David Zubik** to eliminate any and all fees for those seeking a **marriage annulment** in the Diocese of Pittsburgh is being greeted positively, including by one man who had been thinking about it for 40 years.

“When I heard the news I called my pastor, who’s been very supportive, and told him this decision made my Easter,” he said. “I’ve tried to be a good Catholic all my life and wanted to have a clear conscience.”

Sacrificial gifts to *Our Campaign for The Church Alive!* enabled the change, which was inspired by **Pope Francis’** call for marriage tribunals to “do justice freely, as we have freely been forgiven by Jesus Christ.”

“My staff and I have long dreamed of this move,” Bishop Zubik said. “My hope is that this decision will enable many people to participate fully in the sacramental life of the Church.”

A woman currently seeking an annulment said waiving the fees really helps her. “Going through a civil divorce was a strain, including financially,” she said. “This lifts a huge burden. I want to thank all the donors for their generosity.”

Divorced Catholics who wish to remarry need an official finding by a church court that the first marriage, entered in good faith, was not spiritually binding. An annulment opens the door to marriage in the Church and full participation in Catholic sacramental life.

Since the announcement during Holy Week, **inquiries to the tribunal have increased.**

“Several people have told me they appreciate that the Church is trying to reach out to them in a pastoral way,” said **Father Jay Donahue**, pastor of **Saints Simon & Jude Parish** in Green Tree. “This change helps to facilitate a conversation about a difficult time in their lives.”

Fees charged to individual petitioners ranged up to several hundred dollars. While total income to the Tribunal from fees totaled about \$120,000 per year, this represented only about a third of the entire cost of the process; the Diocese has subsidized the balance for many years.

Two-thirds of the fee income will be covered by a Campaign grant, with the remainder from the Parish Share program. Over four years, the campaign funding will diminish, so that by the fifth year, Parish Share will cover the full cost. The campaign will provide a total of \$200,000 over four years.

A Worthwhile Sacrifice



The Almeter Family (l-r), Ted, Erin, Brian, Sam (back), Nicholas, Eileen, and Clara

As thousands of families across southwestern Pennsylvania decide where to enroll their children for the upcoming school year, **Eileen Almeter** says she’s happy to sacrifice for a Catholic education.

Eileen and husband **Brian**, members of **St. Bernadette Parish** in Monroeville, have five children currently enrolled in Catholic schools, thanks in large part to assistance from the **Bishop’s Education Fund**.

“The help we get is truly a blessing. Our children have flourished at our parish school and Serra Catholic,” Eileen said. “We sacrifice a lot. We don’t drive new cars, we don’t take vacations, but we wouldn’t change a thing.”

Our Campaign for The Church Alive! will allocate \$12 million to increase the Fund’s permanent endowment by 60 percent, enabling thousands more students to benefit from a Catholic school education.

“The schools have been very generous to us. We’re blessed with the help that’s out there,” Eileen said. “I know a lot of families that benefit.

“I went through Catholic school, and my mother sees the higher costs today but she knows how important it is,” Eileen added. “We also tell the kids that we need to give back, so we volunteer our time at the fish fry and festival.”

Regarding the added support to the Bishop’s Education Fund, Eileen offers a short prayer. “Amen!”

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THE CHURCH ALIVE!

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You save postage and paper checks while lowering campaign expenses. Electronic payments are easy to set up. Enroll today at <http://churchalivepgh.org/payments/> or scan:



Progress in Our Parishes

Saint Sebastian Parish School is now fully handicap-accessible with the installation of a new elevator. **Father John Rushofsky**, pastor of the Ross Township parish, said students and faculty have been making good use of the elevator since it was installed in December. The next parish project is expansion of the church entry area and handicapped parking spaces.

Father Joe Keenan, pastor of **Saint Pio of Pietrelcina Parish** in Blawnox/Harmar notes that their new youth minister, hired with the help of campaign funds, is bringing more teens into their program. The parish is also benefiting from newly renovated restrooms in the former school, which is home to youth ministry and faith formation.



Students Breanna Jones and Anna Sosso in their new school elevator.

Father Tony Garotta, pastor of **St. Bernadette Parish** in Monroeville reports their campaign funds have been invested in evangelization rallies and literature and books about the faith. They've also installed a video monitor in the church narthex to welcome parishioners and list parish events, and new computers and other technology updates have been made in the school. The parish also has ordered a new organ console.

Support from the campaign has enabled **Saint Maria Goretti Parish** in Pittsburgh's Bloomfield/Garfield/ Friendship area to replace the heating and air conditioning systems in the Immaculate Conception church site and gymnasium. **Father Regis Farmer** said the next project is renovating the church interior and installing an elevator and handicap-accessible restroom.

Campaign gifts have allowed **Saint Philip Parish** in Crafton to add computers and a viewing screen for faith formation classes. **Father Walt Dworak**, longtime pastor at Saint Philip, said they've also made repairs in the school, replaced a water heater and are now repairing stained glass windows.

Refurbished stained glass windows have been installed in **Saint Frances Cabrini** church in Aliquippa, according to **Father Martin Bartel**.

Father Richard Infante, pastor of **Our Lady of Grace Parish** in Scott reports they have completed the third of five major parish projects. A new, state-of-the-art alarm system was installed in the school with sound and visual alerts. Earlier the parish replaced roofs and put energy-efficient lighting in the church.

Saint Hilary Parish in Washington is nearing completion on a series of projects. The bell tower and bells were completely refurbished, and workers installed a music system to play hymns. The interior church walls were repainted, and an artist replaced and hand-painted 48 large fabric panels behind the hanging crucifix.

ON MISSION FOR
THE CHURCH ALIVE!

The Diocese of Pittsburgh is embarking on a dynamic planning initiative focused on growth through evangelization, **Bishop David Zubik** announced in an April 12 letter to the faithful.

The initiative, *On Mission for The Church Alive!*, invites Catholics to take part in an expanded effort to spread the love of Jesus to every person they meet.

The initiative will engage all laity, religious and clergy to offer more vibrant liturgies, invigorate faith formation through evangelization, strengthen school and parish partnerships, and increase participation of the faithful in the life of the Church.

On Mission for The Church Alive! will explore innovative models of ministry, including inter-parish collaboration, ministry teams serving more than one parish, and multiple parishes served by one pastor, in response to changing demographics in parishes and a declining number of priests.

Next month, a year of parish-based prayer will begin, followed by a parish self-study process and consultation within clusters/districts and vicariates in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. In mid-2017, recommendations for new models of ministry will be presented to Bishop Zubik, who will communicate his decisions and a timeline for implementation.

On Mission for The Church Alive! builds on the momentum and excitement generated by *Our Campaign for The Church Alive!*

Bishop Zubik invites the more than 2,000 volunteers who helped make the campaign a success to remain engaged and encourage others to participate more fully in the Church through *On Mission for The Church Alive!* To learn more, visit OnMissionChurchAlive.org.

Sharing God's Blessings



Our Campaign for The Church Alive! is encouraging Catholics across the Diocese of Pittsburgh to be good stewards of God's gifts. See how His goodness is growing in Glenshaw at Saint Mary of the Assumption Parish. Log onto ChurchAlivePgh.org to view the video.