

LEGACY FOR OUR MISSION:

For Our Children and the Future

OPPORTUNITY FUND EXPANDS TO ADDRESS GROWING DEMAND, HIGHER TUITION

Growing demand for Catholic education and rising tuition rates across the archdiocese are prompting significant expansion of the Opportunity Fund, which provides need-based tuition assistance for children in elementary and secondary archdiocesan Catholic schools outside the center city of Indianapolis. The *Legacy for Our Mission* has a goal of growing the Opportunity Fund by \$5 million or more and plans to use the annual interest earned on this amount to assist approximately 250 students in perpetuity.

The Opportunity Fund is a priority of the *Legacy for Our Mission* campaign whose theme is 'For Our Children and the Future.' "We want to distribute more student financial aid to families in and beyond Indianapolis," said Joseph S. Therber, executive director of stewardship and development for the archdiocese.

"The archdiocese has done a great deal for inner-city students," Therber said, "and now wants to supplement this commitment by helping students throughout the archdiocese." An expanded Opportunity Fund will help round out the program and facilitate that expansion.

"Expanding the Opportunity Fund means that children throughout central and southern Indiana will be forever affected in a positive way by the generosity of their fellow Catholics in parishes miles or even counties away," Therber said. "Far from being seen as a sign of separation, this sharing of resources will reflect the Catholic belief that our neighbors are often people we never meet, but whose lives and futures are every bit as real and important as our own."

Just as in center-city Indianapolis, many families in the last decade throughout the archdiocese



Photo by the Criterion staff

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have experienced a tightening of the belt, Therber explained. In some cases, rising tuition rates have simply outstripped the family's ability to pay. This makes it all the more important that all Catholics come together as a collective Church for these children and their Catholic schools.

"As Catholic school costs increase along with other expenses, having adequate funds to provide financial aid to deserving students becomes increasingly

important," said Joseph Peters, associate executive director of Catholic Education for the archdiocese. "We have families in need in virtually every school as a result of plant closures and other economic factors."

The school system of the archdiocese is the second largest in the state of Indiana. Seventy Catholic schools serve nearly 23,000 students at a cost of \$84 million per year to operate. Catholic schools in several areas of the archdiocese are facing rising expense budgets, which nearly always translate into higher tuition rates.

"The Opportunity Fund can spell the difference between a Catholic school education and an alternative that may not be in a child's or family's best interest spiritually, academically or socially," Therber said.

"This fund will support our commitment to serving all students, regardless of their family's financial circumstances, faith or changes in the community's economy," Therber said.

"It is imperative that students confronting some of the most serious socioeconomic, cultural and learning barriers have access to the holistic, high-quality and values-based education that the Catholic schools offer."

Legacy for Our Mission, the archdiocese's capital campaign, is guided by the principles of Christian stewardship and addresses the needs of archdiocesan ministries such as the Opportunity Fund. By contributing to the Legacy for Our Mission campaign through your local parish, a portion of your gift will help meet the goal of expanding the Opportunity Fund to help deserving young people escape the cycle of poverty and achieve their God-given potential.