Generous Hearts

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From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

When I first learned the Lord called Bishop Emeritus Robert Rose home on Ash Wednesday, I was struck by a combination of reverence, appreciation, great respect, and a keen sense of loss. I never had the pleasure of meeting the man, though his reputation as a kind and warm soul has been consistently celebrated through countless stories.

Like so often after loss, Bishop Rose’s passing invited me out of the rhythms of my busyness to reflect on and appreciate what’s important, what matters, and what endures. While doing so, I recalled an old proverb that suggests the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. And thanks to Bishop Rose, the roots of the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan are firmly established today. I am so grateful for this legacy, which will continue to grow, compound, and deepen its impact because of his vision, your support, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

His vision to prioritize a long-term foundation reflected not only his love of the Church, but also his deep sense of stewardship – a conviction that everything we have and everything we are is a gift from God. As a good steward, Bishop Rose was grateful for and generous with his many gifts. This conviction helped him to accomplish many great endeavors as expressions of his faith, which you can read about in this issue of Generous Hearts.

The Trustees, council members, staff, and I are honored to advance Bishop Rose’s vision and steward his legacy with and through the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan. Inspired by our founder’s example, we invite you to join us in reflecting on your gifts and how you are asked to use them to further God’s kingdom. May the Lord who began this good work in each of us see it through to completion.

Yours in Christ,

Greg Deja
Executive Director

“'I invite you to share in our vision of a diocese in which our works of evangelization and service to the needy are not hampered or compromised by a lack of resources.'

Most Reverend Robert J. Rose
In Loving Memory of our Founder

The Catholic Foundation of West Michigan celebrates the life and mourns the death of its founding bishop, Most Reverend Robert J. Rose.

Bishop Rose’s legacy is significant and multi-faceted. Of his many accomplishments, one that will surely endure is his leadership in establishing the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan. We look back on his life and the legacy he leaves through the Foundation.

Bishop Rose’s vision of joyful stewardship has inspired many to share their blessings in gratitude and with clear purpose to build God’s kingdom. His legacy lives on with and through the Catholic Foundation.

August 30, 1989
Installed as the ninth bishop of the Diocese of Grand Rapids.

1995
Established the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan to provide an opportunity for the faithful to share a portion of their blessings for the betterment of the Church and its many ministries.

“Bishop Rose’s vision to focus on a foundation for the long-term support of parishes and schools from the diocesan office was ahead of its time. With his soft-spoken and gentle approach, he made this a priority and took the lead.”
– Mike Jandernoa, founding board chair

1998
Launched “In the Name of the Lord” capital campaign, which raised more than $24 million to establish the Bishop’s Fund for Catholic Education, the restoration of the Cathedral of Saint Andrew, and the remodeling of Saint Henry Spirituality and Ministry Center.

1999
Established the Bishop’s Fund for Catholic Education with the ultimate goal of reaching a point where there was enough support for scholarships for every Catholic student and family who needed them.

1999
Began the Bishop’s Angels Annual Giving Program, bringing together generous hearts across the diocese.

“It was always such a wonderful experience talking with him and listening to his insights. He was just an incredible human being.”
– Russ and Chris Visner, Charter Bishop’s Angels

Parishes and schools began establishing endowment funds, transferring their independent endowments to foundations to the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan.

By pooling assets, the Foundation gained access to top managers and exclusive asset classes while driving down costs for fund beneficiaries.

“While the establishment of the Foundation was initially focused upon making Catholic school education affordable well into the future, Bishop Rose was amazed and pleased in the years that followed as the Foundation diversified to include parish and diocesan ministry funds.”
– Mark Morrow, former executive director

2001
Established the Jubilee Justice Fund to strengthen programs and initiatives that provide care and create hope for all our brothers and sisters.

2003
Retired after twenty-two years of episcopal ministry.

Bishop Rose’s episcopal legacy lives on through the Catholic Foundation. Under the leadership of Bishop Kevin M. Britt (deceased), Bishop Walter A. Hurley, and Bishop David J. Walkowiak, the Catholic Foundation continues to grow.

“It was a joy to serve the Foundation for 19 years because I enjoyed the people so much and because Bishop Rose did such a great job of getting everyone’s buy-in.”
– Ray Lorenz, former board chair

November 4, 2015
Awarded Visionary Honoree at the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan’s 20th anniversary celebration event.

2020
Catholic Foundation expands products and services with a new brand and strategic plan.

2021
Catholic Foundation surpasses $100M in assets.

March 2, 2022
Born into eternal life. His legacy lives on with and through the Catholic Foundation.
Service on Sunday Afternoons

A grandson honors his grandfather's legacy with a new endowment fund

As a young boy, Thomas Gole noticed his grandfather, Frank J. Markel, always seemed to disappear on Sunday afternoons. Eventually, his mother let him in on a little “secret”: Grandpa was part of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Sunday afternoons were set aside for serving others. Grandpa and other members of the Society, known as Vincentians, went on home visits, offering person-to-person service to neighbors in need.

Inspired by his grandfather’s faith and commitment to charitable work, Thomas became involved in the Saint Anthony Conference (the Society’s term for a local parish chapter).

“Our Conference meets twice a month,” Thomas shares. “We pray together and like the disciples, we go two-by-two, to visit and help vulnerable members of our community. For example, we recently helped move a single mother and her toddler into an apartment. They had been homeless, but with the help of our Conference and items purchased from the St. Vincent de Paul thrift store, we were able to provide beds, bedding, and housewares to get them back on their feet.”

The Conference at Saint Anthony of Padua is the oldest in the Diocese of Grand Rapids. “We were founded in 1919,” Thomas says. “My grandpa served as the treasurer for many years. Being an active part of this lay ministry has been a wonderful way to grow in holiness, stay connected to his memory, and keep St. Vincent de Paul going.”

To further honor his grandfather and support the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Thomas and his wife Laurie approached the Catholic Foundation of West Michigan. Their goal? Create an endowment fund that would provide seed money to start new conferences throughout the Diocese and help existing Conferences, if needed.

“There are 80 parishes in the Diocese of Grand Rapids, but only three St. Vincent de Paul Conferences at the parish level. We once had 38,” Thomas says. “We pray that the St. Vincent de Paul Endowment Fund, in memory of Frank J. Markel, will help create and support conferences throughout West Michigan.”

Interested in starting a conference at your parish? Contact Jim White, president of the Grand Rapids Council, at j.white@svdpmideastregion.org.
Through charitable bequests, Paul and Helen Walsh's generosity continues to live on
5 Reasons to Open an Endowed Fund

An endowment fund is a permanent legacy of faith, as seen through the examples of Bishop Rose, Frank Markel, and Paul and Helen Walsh. An endowment is the best way to provide a perpetual source of revenue for the parish, school, ministry, or organization important to you.

Contact us to learn about the pathways to open an endowment, helping more Catholic causes say with confidence that their mission is here for good.

1 Leaves a lasting legacy that reflects your faith and values

Leave a permanent legacy of faith to the ministries most important to you. We work closely with you to understand your wishes and clearly state your intentions. We then steward your endowment by honoring your intentions and investing the fund in a socially-responsible manner that aligns with Catholic values.

2 Ensures stable and ongoing financial support – forever

Many savvy donors want to help build long-term strength, not just meet today’s immediate needs. The beneficiary can rely on—and plan for—the grants the endowment provides. An endowment positions the charity to weather economic downturns, shifting demographics, and changes in funding sources over time, sustaining the mission long into the future.

3 Pays tribute to a special person in your life

Is there someone who has made a significant impact on you? Consider honoring their legacy with an endowment which bears fruit forever. Often endowments are named for the family, or in honor or memory of someone special to you.

4 Reflects your Catholic faith in your will

Your commitment to the Catholic causes you care about can continue beyond your lifetime. Endowments may be seeded with a gift of cash or appreciated securities now and then mature with a legacy gift as part of your estate. Include a gift in your will or trust, or through a beneficiary designation in a retirement savings account or life insurance policy.

5 Inspires others to join in generosity

Match your passions with friends or family to open an endowment together for a common mission. Or lead your family into generosity by opening the endowment and encouraging them to contribute as well. Once an endowment is open, gifts of any size are accepted.

By opening an endowment or supporting an existing endowment, you are sending a message that you are intentionally supporting the long-term stability, fiscal responsibility, and financial viability of a Catholic ministry.
"Your confidence in the Foundation and its mission will continue to result in many good works long after we have gone home to God."

Most Reverend Robert J. Rose  
1930 – 2022

Most Rev. David J. Walkowiak presents Bishop Emeritus Robert J. Rose with the Visionary Honoree Award in 2015.