



A Case for Strengthening Church Resources

What if there was a means to provide essential relief to those impacted by COVID-19 and also future crises? What if it leveraged the financial expertise of lay Catholics and helped ensure funding for Catholic services, education and parish life in the United States for years to come?

PURPOSE:

To respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting financial devastation, as well as be prepared for future crises by developing a permanent, independent source of emergency funding and long-term financial support for Catholic ministries in the United States.

CONTEXT:

Historically and traditionally, Catholics have been on the frontlines to serve those most in need. The Church is the largest global service network in the world. Even now, when Catholic ministries have been upended by the COVID-19 crisis, Catholics have come together to respond to the pandemic with courage and a renewed spirit.

The public ministries of the Church are a cornerstone of our nation's infrastructure, providing healthcare, education, and social services. Many who work in Catholic social services are first responders and essential workers, our vital heroes. Yet, in times of crises, too many ministries find themselves at risk of closure, which could have a devastating impact on patients, students, immigrants, refugees, families, and those living on the margins of society, as well as the populations and budgets of the cities and towns in which they live.

There are more than 17,000 parishes in the U.S., which are vital centers of Catholic activity. In addition to providing spiritual and sacramental ministry, the parish is an essential community resource, providing education, direct services, and community prayer. Important services accessed through parishes include: emergency access to food, addiction support, assistance to victims of abuse, family initiatives, religious education, immigrant support and more.

CHALLENGE:

The funding landscape can be inconsistent, inequitable, untimely, and under-resourced. Circumstances contributing to these variables can include: demographics; geography; the macro economic environment; tax reform and legislation; reactions to Church crises; trust and

confidence in financial management practices; emotions; attitudes; specific diocesan and parish strategies; and leadership personalities.

OPPORTUNITY:

The vast number of Catholics who give to their parish, bishop's appeal and Church capital campaign, as well as the various public ministries of the Church and individual Catholic nonprofits, is a wonderful testament to the generosity among lay Catholics. Together with the individual and collective expertise among lay Catholics, these present a unique resource for addressing the financial challenges facing the Church.

This raises a key question: **"How can we leverage lay Catholics who are experts in financial management and stewardship to work co-responsibly with Church leaders to effectively manage and efficiently distribute Church resources?"**

Areas to consider:

- Relief – Creating a permanent channel for the quick collection and allocation of funds in a crisis
- Integration – Establishing a system-wide effort to leverage economies of scale
- Securitization – Building a means to ensure mid-term funding for ministries to reinforce cash needs during crises and seed capital for strategic development
- Endowments – Developing a pooled investment initiative.