



Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Toledo

**Letter to the Faithful Following the One-Year Anniversary
of My Appointment as Bishop of Toledo**

21 November 2015

Dear Friends in Christ,

I write to you as I complete my first year as the Eighth Bishop of Toledo. I greet you warmly and am full of love for you and northwest Ohio!

Thank you for your warm welcome. I am deeply moved by the faith, hope, and love I have encountered over the last year. I have visited every deanery of the Diocese; I have visited rural, suburban, and urban parishes, and the various institutions of the Diocese. We have so much to be proud of. Thank you for welcoming me into your parishes and homes and orienting me in my work as your bishop. I have so enjoyed getting to know you!

I have taken this year to learn about the Diocese, its priests, deacons, consecrated religious, and parishioners – and the rich history of the Church in northwest Ohio. There is so much good here, which comes from you, the faithful. I am heartened by your welcoming spirit, strong faith in Christ and His Church, and commitment to her teachings. I am also grateful for your ongoing generosity to the Annual Catholic Appeal for the Diocese and your financial support of your parish and school communities. You have made me feel at home, and I know I am with my family here in northwest Ohio.

Fatherhood and the family of faith. In my homily on October 21, 2014, the eve of my Installation as the Eighth Bishop of Toledo, I spoke to you as your new bishop, who came to stand in the person of God the Father as I became the father of this family of faith. This was and is a daunting task. As I did then, I beg you again to pray for me, that I myself may live as a child of the Father, a holy and ardent bishop, who loves you, nurtures you, and who desires one day to be united with you in heaven. With all my heart, I renew my pledge to love you with every fiber of my being, to hold you daily close in prayer, to teach, govern, and sanctify as the Father would have me do in Jesus. Every good father loves his children unconditionally; so I strive to love you. Every good father strives to love first by example and to protect his family from evil; so I strive to love you. As your father, it is my sacred duty to be a faithful steward of the household entrusted to me.

We have a rich past and we are all indebted and grateful for the good work of each bishop who came before me, from Bishop Schrembs to Archbishop Blair. And I am particularly grateful to each priest, deacon, consecrated religious, and lay person who has contributed so much to our local church. We have a bright future, and I am invigorated by the good we have here: the enthusiasm of our Catholic families, the generous outreach to the poor and those in need, the commitment to excellence in Catholic education, the interest of many young people in holy vocations, and the dedication to become holy disciples of the Lord.

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I have moored myself to my duty as your Bishop to teach, govern, and sanctify. What a tremendous joy it has been to celebrate the Sacraments and to preach and proclaim the Gospel throughout the entire Diocese. Today I write to you about my duty to govern.

My charge and obligation as Bishop. The assets of the Church do not belong to the bishop. They belong to you. These resources are entrusted to me for your pastoral care. I am thus compelled to ensure the responsible administration and faithful stewardship of the Diocese and its resources in service of the Catholic community going forward. While I am heartened by so much good in the Diocese, my charge as shepherd requires that I focus not just on what is working well, but also on what needs improvement. Let me turn to some areas where we can improve.

A financial and legal review of the Diocese. It is typical after a new bishop is installed for him to study his diocese and to assess its strengths and weaknesses. In the spring, I brought in objective, professional consultants with experience in dioceses around the country to take a look at how we do things and provide us with their wise counsel and suggestions on how to improve. This group of professionals in accounting and secular law performed an initial financial and legal review of the Diocese, its funds, and its governance structure, as well as the Diocese's real estate, capital improvements, and other resources. While the consultants identified areas where we perform well, they also identified areas that need improvement.

I required these consultants to present their findings to those who counsel me: the College of Consultors, Diocesan Finance Council, and Senior Staff. The College of Consultors and Finance Council are established by canon law (the universal law that governs the Church) and serve as advisors to me. They are wise and thoughtful priests, business people, and community leaders. Thus, I am not alone in this work. I have also spoken with and relied on my brother Priests. I have welcomed discussion and encouraged them to question me and to question the consultants. I am grateful for their leadership and guidance, as well as their candid feedback, as we strive to ensure our house is in order going forward and as we plan for our bright future. All of these advisors unanimously supported the steps I describe below.

We are beginning to receive and implement the recommendations from the team of legal and accounting consultants. There are two general types of recommendations: financial and organizational restructuring. What we have learned is that we must better plan, develop, monitor, and evaluate the financial affairs and the governance structure of the Diocese. This means that change is coming – change in how we govern, lead, and steward our limited resources.

Financial challenges. To be direct, after careful study for a year, it is now clear to me that the Diocese has several serious financial challenges. I am referring to challenges at the diocesan level, not the parishes. As I work to be a diligent father and steward, I must focus on the Diocese and its financial health and well-being.

Below are some examples:

Financial Weakness: We have financial deficits in several programs. Certain areas simply are not financially strong and will need to be reevaluated. We cannot continue to maintain multiple programs that are not sustainable. You will see more detail in the months ahead, but we will have to be more efficient, and even sell assets, in order to get our house in order.

Deficit Spending: We want to be responsible in our governance and finances, but we have been deficit spending for years. Simply put, spending more than we receive is not a sustainable practice and does not prepare us for the future.

Inadequate Resources: Currently, we have insufficient unrestricted cash balances. This ties our hands and limits our ability to develop new ministries, fund programs and services for the Church, and meet our mission. While asking the faithful to contribute more is one solution, it is imperative I ensure that the Diocese has the appropriate systems and procedures of good stewardship in place before doing so.

In sum, our systems, procedures, and governance structures do not meet the highest contemporary standards under canon law or secular law. I intend to administer the Diocese with an increased openness and professionalism that meets the current standards of business excellence. To that end, I have been working with the College of Consultors, the Diocesan Finance Council, Senior Staff, and our consultants to develop a plan to improve our financial condition and enhance the administration of the Diocese.

Upcoming changes. I will keep you informed of our plans and work every step of the way. As I mentioned, I have decided to start with the administrative offices of the Diocese. My guiding principle is that improvements to the chancery and its programs will make the parishes better. You can expect a variety of changes:

Updating of Policies and Procedures and More Stringent Reporting and Budgeting: We are updating our policies, governance structure, and procedures to reflect the 21st century. We simply have not modernized or kept up with the law and the current best practices of administering an organization of the size and breadth of the Diocese. This creates unnecessary uncertainty for the Diocese.

Restructuring: We intend to revise the structure of the various funds of the Diocese containing both liquid and invested funds. We will implement a financial plan to discontinue the practice of deficit spending and will also explore ways to better steward the real estate holdings of the Diocese. Accordingly, we will need to sell some assets and eliminate or change some programming to ensure a sustainable model that is financially healthy and in accordance with good business practices.

Transparency: We will improve our outreach and reporting on the fiscal affairs, resources, and monetary policies and procedures of the Diocese. We will continue with annual independent audits of our financial statements, and you will also be periodically updated about the financial and organizational affairs of the Diocese.

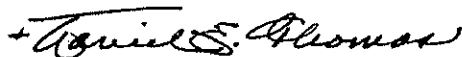
My commitment. Just as I am committed to teach and sanctify in the name of the Lord and the Church, so I am committed to the highest standards of accountability and fiscal integrity. I am convinced that, by establishing and improving financial stewardship practices, we will enhance our ability to: (1) minister to our people, (2) meet our mission and goals, (3) direct our funds where they can be best utilized, and (4) lay the foundation for improving our fundraising capabilities. We want our resources strategically allocated for maximum impact on our programming and preaching the Gospel.

My task as the father of this family of faith is to responsibly lead and govern the Diocese. In doing so, I must ensure we carefully and solemnly steward your resources. I do this not only for you, but for the generations of Catholic families to come. I work on behalf of the Church – my loyalty is to the Diocese, not individuals – and I pledge that our decisions will be guided by what is in the best interests of the Diocese as a whole and our future generations.

Looking ahead. I am here for you, as a father, brother, and friend in the Church. I am confident in our future and know that we will remedy the issues listed above. We will face and overcome these challenges together because where challenges abound, God's grace abounds all the more.

As I begged of you when I first arrived as your bishop one year ago, I again beg your good prayers that I may spend myself for love of souls in teaching, governing, and sanctifying in the name of Jesus for the sake of His Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,



Most Revered Daniel E. Thomas
Bishop of Toledo