

Archdiocese of Baltimore releases annual report for 2014-15

As Baltimore began recovering from the civil unrest that followed the death of Freddie Gray Jr. last year, leaders of Catholic Charities of Baltimore redoubled their efforts at addressing the poor conditions and lack of opportunity that plague West Baltimore.

Food pantries at St. Peter Claver, St. Gregory the Great and St. Edward were either established or expanded, and one part-time benefits eligibility counselor was assigned to provide the parishes added support.

At St. Edward, in partnership with the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, Catholic Charities launched an auto mechanic service technician training program - graduating an initial class of 12 and enrolling a second class of 20.

Catholic Charities also coordinated the pending launch of the Safe Streets program at St. Peter Claver, working with other partners to engage the community and prevent violence.

All the new initiatives are made possible with the financial support from Catholics in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, according to William J. McCarthy Jr., executive director of Catholic Charities.

"It's absolutely very critical," said McCarthy, noting that much of the support his agency receives comes through the Archbishop's Annual Appeal, which also helps fund food programs such as the one at Our Daily Bread Employment Center in Baltimore.

According to a newly released annual report from the Archdiocese of Baltimore, support for Catholic charitable outreach, parish ministry, Catholic education, religious education and other archdiocesan priorities continues to be strong.

The total operating income for fiscal year 2014-2015 was \$35 million, \$13.4 million of which was contributed by parishioners through the cathedralicum assessments at their local faith communities. \$9.7 million was raised through archdiocesan annual campaigns - \$1.8 million more than what was raised last year.

Catholic Center operating expenses totaled \$38.9 million.

Negative changes in the market value of investments and increased obligations in retirement programs were contributing factors in a \$13.1 million consolidated operating deficit for Catholic Center operating expenses and other activities, according to William I. Baird III, chief financial officer for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

"We continue to get great results from the commitment of donors to the Embracing Our Mission-Shaping our Future campaign as well as the Archbishop's Annual Appeal," he said. "Certainly, the offertory remained stable for the year 2015."

Because of a change in the way actuarial tables are calculated, liabilities for lay and clergy pensions expanded, he said.

"It continues to be one of the great priorities for the archbishop," Baird said, "to make sure that we continue to pay those benefits."

In total, more than \$5.3 million in grants were distributed in tuition assistance, \$11.3 million in parish/school support, \$1.9 million for programs at the Catholic Center and \$4.8 million for Catholic Charities and other local agencies, according to the report.

Among the 13 archdiocesan-wide special collections conducted last year, parishioners gave \$413,812 for the care of retired religious and \$317,710 for the special care of diocesan priests.

Dr. Barbara McGraw Edmondson, superintendent of Catholic schools, believes the financial support for Catholic school families is critical. She noted that for many, tuition assistance is "a must."

"The tuition scholarships that are provided to students across the archdiocese in both our elementary and high schools allow our families to choose what they believe is the best education and formation for their children," she said.

Edmondson added that "in our urban schools, to attend Catholic school is to open a door to opportunity."

"A Catholic education makes a difference," she said. "It is transformational for the student and the family."

Some other areas that received financial support include the introduction of 3D printers in Catholic schools, prison ministry in Western Maryland, Interfaith Housing Alliance in Frederick County, Camp GLOW for adults with developmental disabilities and senior housing.

Comboni Missionary Sister Maria Mercedes Castillo Razo, director of the Office of Hispanic Ministry, said outreach to the Spanish-speaking community expanded last year. Hispanic ministries were launched at St. Rita in Dundalk and Our Lady of Pompei in Highlandtown.

Just a few of the many other initiatives in the Hispanic community funded with archdiocesan support included advanced pastoral training for Spanish-speaking lay leaders throughout the archdiocese and a Posadas that was held in Baltimore for recently reunited families that had emigrated to Baltimore from Central America.

"To see how people are supporting the mission of the archdiocese is beautiful," Sister Mercedes said. "They are touching the lives of many people."

See the full annual report [here](#).