

Catholic Communications Campaign helps spread Good News

Last year, with the help of the annual Catholic Communications Campaign, the Archdiocese of Baltimore shared the Gospel message over a wide range of communications channels. The archdiocese used vehicles such as a completely updated archdiocesan website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, the electronic archdiocesan bulletin, the archbishop's email messages and the Catholic Baltimore radio show to take the Good News to wherever people receive information.

Catholics in parishes throughout the archdiocese contributed \$135,765 to the Catholic Communications Campaign in 2017. Archbishop William E. Lori is encouraging them to support the annual campaign again this year when the special collection is taken up in most parishes the weekend of May 12-13, World Communications Day.

✕ “By generously supporting this collection, you are spreading the Gospel and helping others encounter Christ every day,” he said. “Your gifts will not only support projects on a national and international scale but also here in our own archdiocese. Of the funds we collect, one half will remain here in the archdiocese to assist our evangelization efforts through local communications projects.”

Last year, the Archdiocese of Baltimore unveiled an updated, mobile-friendly website that features local, national and international news, commentary and blogs from the Catholic Review and Catholic News Service, featured local homilists, audio from the Catholic Baltimore radio program, videos on archdiocesan, parish and school activities, a calendar of events, evangelization resources, school information, ministry outreach and much more.

In Baltimore and throughout the United States, Catholics see the results of the Catholic Communications Campaign daily directly in their hands through social media. Because online traffic is measured, diocesan communications directors know that slightly more than 50 percent of what they post is viewed or heard on handheld

devices, not desktop computers. Knowing that helps them shape their message.

“We know right away what people think because they write comments on our Facebook or Twitter posts or give you a thumbs-up,” said Alexandra Danter, social media specialist for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. “They share our posts on their social accounts, which increases the audience. It’s a great way to get our message out and encourage discussion.”

Started in 1979, the collection is the only one to designate 50 percent of proceeds for dioceses and 50 percent to communication efforts of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. About \$8 million is raised nationally.

In the Diocese of Phoenix, campaign funds pay to broadcast Masses from Sts. Simon and Jude Cathedral. In addition to over-the-air television, the Masses are livestreamed on YouTube and simulcast on the Relevant Radio network.

The broadcasts “are a huge priority for us, to bring Christ to the homebound,” said Rob DeFrancesco, diocesan communications director. With online analytics, the diocese has precise measurements on the reach of the cathedral Mass: “All over the world. It hits almost every country in the world.”

The Diocese of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, uses campaign grants to produce brief reflections by Bishop Ronald W. Gainer that run during Advent and Lent on WHYF-AM, Holy Family Radio. The goal is “to invite people to come back to church, to come back to the family,” Aponick told Catholic News Service.

Other elements include an email newsletter and a video project on parishes’ history that has included a tour of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus near Hanover. The diocese also has ventured into podcasting through Breadbox Media. Podcasts, Aponick said, “have found new life with handheld devices.”

“We’ve tried to be there for people in a variety of media because things are so splintered and things are changing so quickly.”

He considers himself “still a firm believer” in print media.

“It all has to be viewed in what the church is trying to say,” he said. “Knowing what

the core message is and finding ways to make that available.”

Sometimes, the stories of ventures helped by the campaign involve desperate need, as with the rehabilitation of the radio station for the Diocese of Borongan where Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 caused more than 6,000 deaths and widespread devastation across central Philippines.

A grant of \$42,500 from the campaign bought studio equipment and reconstruction of the transmitter and studio building, Borongan Bishop Crispin B. Varquez reported.

The station remains a vital communications link in Eastern Samar province, where churches were among the few structures to survive the storm and where government help has been limited.

*Click **here** for more information about communications efforts in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.*

Kurt Jensen of Catholic News Service and George P. Matysek Jr. contributed to this report.