



"This I ask you: be shepherds, with the odor of the sheep, make it real, as shepherds among your flock, fishers of men."

— Pope Francis, Chrism Mass,
Holy Thursday 2013

Your priest tends to your parish family much in the same way a shepherd tends his sheep. He stands "In Persona Christi," (in the person of Christ) extending the loving embrace of the greatest Shepherd, Jesus Christ, our Sacrificial Lamb.

Priests touch our lives in many ways: they baptize our children, comfort us in the confessional, witness our marriage vows and hold our loved ones hands as the Lord calls them home.

Imagine all of the people throughout Southwest Michigan whose lives, both individually and collectively, our priests have touched and transformed by their preaching and teaching, by the way they have celebrated the Holy Eucharist and the sacraments, and by their patient and attentive service of administration. Every aspect of the life and ministry of a priest is a gift from God, who is leading us home. Our priests dedicate their lives to building up and maintaining the communion of our Church. Our priests bring people closer to the Lord.

Diocesan Priests Retirement Collection

In order to strengthen the retirement fund for our priests, the Diocese of Kalamazoo has established a new Diocesan Priests Retirement Collection.

During his years of priestly ministry, a diocesan priest is supported mainly by a parish community. But the retirement years can be difficult for these men who may dedicate as many as 50 years or more of their lives to caring for and ministering to others. Many faithful priests are left with minimal income upon retirement.

They participate in the Social Security program, but since they receive modest salaries during their many years of ministry, their monthly Social Security benefits are much smaller than those typically received by retired lay people.

Retired priests of the Diocese of Kalamazoo currently receive a small pension which is used for basic needs such as food, housing and transportation. Most Diocesan priests live independently during their retirement, unlike priests of religious communities who live together during their senior years and are cared for by their religious institutes.



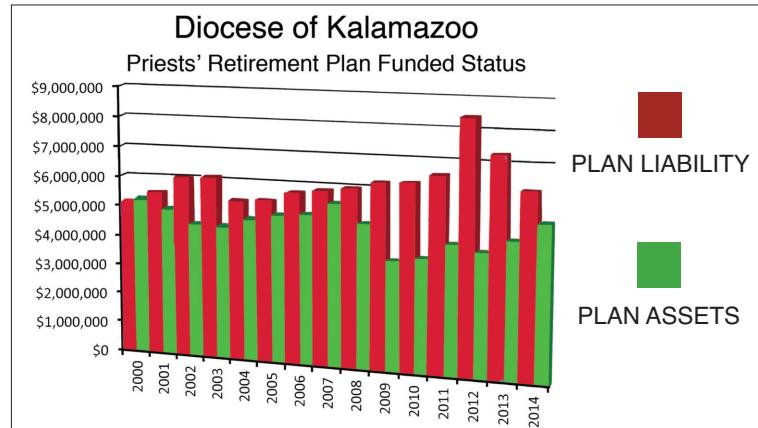
Priests from around the Diocese of Kalamazoo have dedicated their lives to pastoral ministry and prayer. Pictured (L-R): Msgr. Thomas Martin, Rev. Robert Creagan, Rev. Joseph Xavier, MSFS and Rev. Donald Klingler.

A Pressing Need

As is the case with many companies' and institutions' pension plans, our priests' retirement program is not fully funded. While parishes are assessed an annual amount, these parish assessments have fallen short of what is needed to provide necessary benefits to our priests. The situation has become concerning due to the significant decline and fluctuations in investments.

A Significant Shortfall

In 1993, the actuarial asset value of the Priests' Retirement Plan was approximately \$2.2 million. The graph below illustrates how the fund has grown in the past 13 years. The actuarial value of assets in 2014 was \$5.1 million. The graph also shows how the accrued actuarial liabilities have grown.



In 2014, the accrued actuarial liability was \$6.1 million, leaving an unfunded liability of approximately \$1 million. In 2014, 19 priests were receiving retirement benefits through the Priests' Retirement Plan. The average age of our priests is high, and with a large number of priests nearing retirement, there is a pressing need to provide for these men who have so faithfully served us. In addition, health care costs nationwide are skyrocketing.

The diocese must plan to meet the health care needs of retired priests now and in the years to come. It must provide the necessary resources to meet the high costs of medical services, prescription drugs, gaps in Medicare coverage and long-term care. The unfunded liability in our priests' retirement fund is now approximately \$1 million.



Pictured (L-R): Newly Ordained Priests in 2013 Rev. Benjamin Huynh, Rev. Thomas McNally, Bishop Emeritus James A. Murray, Bishop Paul J. Bradley and Rev. Evelio Ramirez.