



**OFFICE OF THE BISHOP  
THE DIOCESE OF TOLEDO**

1933 SPIELBUSCH AVENUE  
TOLEDO, OHIO 43604-5360

January 20, 2010

Dear Fathers/Pastoral Leaders,

There are two things I would like to bring to your attention.

**The first has to do with our Catholic Schools.**

Diocesan enrollment totals for 2009-10 show an overall decrease of 6% in our student population. This is a tremendous loss for one year, and only compounds the losses that we have been experiencing for at least ten years.

I feel that it is important for me as Bishop to issue a timely message to all the people of the diocese regarding our Catholic schools. My goal is greater awareness of where we stand, and also greater commitment and cooperation in support of our schools.

In order to accomplish this, and having consulted with the Deans and the Bishop's Education Council among others, I have prepared an audio/video presentation of 12 minutes to be distributed to every parish, whether or not you have a school of your own.

I ask that this message be played in video form (or audio alone if video is not feasible) at all weekend Masses on either January 30/31 or February 6/7. These week-ends precede and conclude Catholic Schools Week. Some of you may also have the capability to set up the video on a DVD player as a continuous loop in your gathering spaces after Masses. I also ask that you post the video on your school and parish websites.

My message is not a homily, and is not meant to replace the homily. Nor is it tied to any particular event or timetable. Precisely for that reason I also hope that in the coming months the video will be presented to foster discussion as widely as possible at parish meetings, especially Parish Pastoral Councils, Finance Councils and School Councils.

Whenever the opportunity presents itself, please share the message with local business people and legislators. We want to get the message out to the wider community, because our schools benefit everyone. This could be accomplished by showing the video on a desktop or laptop computer.

Please do not hesitate to contact Sally Oberski in the Diocesan Communications Office if you need additional copies of the video or audio CD. She will make available to you as many as you need.

The recorded message speaks for itself, and I look forward to further ongoing discussions by everyone, especially priests, as to how we can better support and sustain Catholic schools in our diocese, even as we recognize that things are changing.

**The second item is *The Manhattan Declaration*.**

On November 20, 2009, a group of prominent Christian clergy, ministry leaders and scholars released an unprecedented 4,700 word document which gives common witness to three foundational principles of justice and the common good. These three are (1) the sanctity of human life in all stages and conditions; (2) the dignity of marriage as the conjugal union of husband and wife; and (3) the rights of conscience and religious liberty.

In the words of the authors: "Inasmuch as these truths are foundational to human dignity and the well-being of society, they are inviolable and non-negotiable. Because they are increasingly under assault from powerful forces in our culture, we are compelled today to speak out forcefully in their defence, and to commit ourselves to honoring them fully no matter what pressures are brought upon us and our institutions to abandon or compromise them. We make this commitment not as partisans of any political group but as followers of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

Originally signed by more than 125 Orthodox, Catholic and evangelical Christian leaders, the Declaration now has over 400,000 signatures, including mine.

Anyone can add their signature, and I invite you and your parishioners to consider doing so. To sign, you need only go to [manhattandeclaration.org](http://manhattandeclaration.org).

I am grateful for your efforts on many fronts these days in the areas of ethical and moral matters, state funding for our schools, and health care and immigration reform. Let us continue to pray for one another.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair  
Bishop of Toledo