

Rationale and Policies

Ensuring Ethical Fundraising



Diocese of Westminster

“The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God, celebrating the sacraments and exercising the ministry of charity. These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could be equally left to others, but is part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.”

-- Deus Caritas Est (25)

The Diocese of Westminster and its parishes are truly blessed with thousands of generous Catholics. We thank them for all they have done, all they currently do week in and week out, and for responding positively when asked to fund the mission of our Diocese. Their unfailing generosity enables us to fulfil our responsibility to preach the word of God, to celebrate the sacraments, and to exercise that ministry of charity which is an indispensable expression of our very being as the Church in Westminster. For such generosity, we are most grateful.

1. Raising Funds

Since New Testament times, raising funds for the life and mission of the Church has been a constant activity (1. Cor.16; Rom 15.26-28 and Acts 24.17 and 2 Cor 8-9.15). Our days are no different.

The life and activity of the Church in Westminster is almost entirely dependent on the gifts of time and money from parishioners and friends. Parishes, schools and other agencies and centres of activity, all engage in fundraising to which there is a generous response.

The running costs of parishes are met through regular giving in collections. Capital projects and extraordinary needs lead parishes to turn to their parishioners for special gifts in addition to Offertory donations. These too are met with generosity.

Alongside government funding for salaries, operations and upkeep, our Catholic Schools hold fundraising events and make appeals so that they can provide excellence in education without compromise, or for special ‘extras’ to benefit the students and the curriculum.

In addition there are services and ministries which are provided at the Diocesan level, including those meeting statutory duties and those supporting and encouraging local initiatives. These are met, for the most part, through the aggregated contributions of parishes through a levy. The further development of these services, together with social outreach programmes and responses to emerging and urgent needs, require other funding efforts, including direct appeals to parishioners on behalf of the Cardinal so that he can discharge his duties both within the Diocese and in its mission.

Patterns of public funding in support of many of these activities are often now circumscribed by conditions which directly oppose key Catholic values. Other sources of funding have to be found or the activities abandoned. The diversity of cultures and traditions within the parishes of the diocese also suggest a variety of approaches and responses.

2. Our Fundraising Remit

The call to serve the neediest in our society is an ever-present part of our faith. Indeed, in the face of the need to rebuild public trust in the Church it is an even more pressing obligation. Fundraising will always be necessary in order to enable such activities. Fundraising itself is not the objective; it is a means to an end; a way to help provide practical expressions of the Church's mission.

The generosity of so many Catholics demonstrates a clear understanding that making financial contributions towards these works is one aspect of discipleship: sharing with the needy the fruit of one's own effort and blessings. This is done first in thanksgiving to God and secondly in service to our brothers and sisters, as Christ and the Gospel instructs us. Therefore, all fundraising in the name of the Church must embody the spirit and motivation of true discipleship. It has to be a reaching out to people with the best of intentions, since the act of giving which is being sought is an expression of living faith in Christ and His Church.

Out of respect for this precious motivation, it is of crucial importance that the uses to which gifts are given are clearly related to the work of discipleship and the fruit of that work evident and appreciated. Reports to donors are not only factual but also illustrative of the faith dimension of all that is being done, thereby demonstrating how what has been given in faith is adding to the life of faith.

3. Guidance on Giving

The demands of the Gospel and the call of Jesus require us all to examine from time to time our attitude to our own wealth in relation to the needs of others. The teaching of the Church asks us to look at our use of our time, talents and resources in support of its work and its pastors. All are expected to take part in the works of mercy, both spiritual and corporal. This can be fulfilled in gifts of time, talent and financial assistance.

Gifts come in many and varied forms, and should be proportional to one's ability and resources, yet having an impact on the range of other options open to us. Gifts that are simply from 'the loose change' of time and cash may not necessarily be a worthy measure of what we can give. All giving flows best from a time of reflection and prayer. The decision of whether or not to give, how much, and in what form, rests with each adult parishioner who has the ability to make an informed and clear decision. No form of coercion or pressure is or will be used.

This remit is the basis on which parishioners may be asked to make a contribution beyond their parish giving, aware that the choice is totally up to them.

4. Policies with Respect to Fundraising

Accordingly, the policies of the Diocese of Westminster in respect to its fundraising activities and procedures are set forth as follows:

- All fundraising activities will be positive in nature, dignified in approach, respectful in methods used, and will clearly state our gratitude for giving, and utmost respect for those deciding not to give since all giving is voluntary and is an individual matter of choice.
- The Diocese of Westminster will abide by all aspects of UK law, in letter and spirit, and the standards set forth by the Charities Commission of the UK Government, and the guidance set by the UK Institute of Fundraising.
- Anyone informing the Diocese of their wishes to opt-out or be withheld from mailings and other forms of contact shall be respected and removed from the contact lists and databases.
- All data and personal information, by virtue of the person being a member of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Westminster or associated with its parishes, shall be used solely within the diocese and never given or sold to outside entities or organisations for fundraising other purposes.
- All appeals, campaigns and collections will be clearly identified as to their purpose, and all uses of donated funds will be as authorised by the Diocese of Westminster.
- The Diocese of Westminster will not make telephonic solicitations, nor employ outside contracted telemarketing firms or third-party fundraisers to directly solicit our parishioners in the name of the Church. Only officials and volunteer members of the Diocese of Westminster shall directly solicit parishioners.
- Uses of donated funds will always be charitable and within the mission and objectives of the Catholic Church. We will never connect access to the religious life of the Church with a requirement to give.
- We believe in the right of each member of the Church to be informed as to our activities and to make his or her own decision about whether to give, how much, and when. Whilst fundraising requests will suggest amounts for consideration from time to time, no pressure, deadlines or repeated requests to give will be made as part of one appeal or another.
- The Diocese of Westminster will decline, return or not knowingly accept any gift or gift from any source clearly inconsistent with the teachings and ethos of the Church, including gifts from individuals and companies engaged in pornography, prostitution, arms and weapons trade, abortifacients, slave labour, criminal or illegal activities or from any organisation or persons closely associated with human rights violations. The Diocese reserves the right to refuse any gift or donation or benefit which would potentially damage the reputation of the Church and the Diocese.
- The Church is particularly attentive to the vulnerable and the poor. Whilst all Catholics are called to consider giving what they can, in any form they can, we will make every effort never to approach vulnerable elderly people, those without the capacity to make an informed clear decision, and those who have been recently bereaved. We can only know this through direct communication with their loved ones, their local parishes and from experience in prior activities.

- The Diocese of Westminster in all its fundraising appeals, campaigns and ventures, observes the rule of 'good stewardship' of donated funds. No activity will ever amount to a programme-to-cost-ratio of less than 80 pence of every pound donated going to the actual programme or objective. We will strive to keep the cost-per-pound raised to a maximum of 10 pence in the design of every fundraising project.
- The Diocese of Westminster and its entities will strive to maximise the value of Gift Aid with every donation made, which is a valuable source of reclaimed tax from taxpayers at no additional cost to them, thereby showing a commitment to taking full advantage of generosity entrusted to us.
- Whilst the Diocese of Westminster and its associated entities are encouraged to honour and thank donors publicly for their generosity, being a donor, and especially those of larger sums, shall not influence the conduct of the Diocese, or allow access or preference of an exclusive nature in any personal, spiritual, or business dealings with the Diocese. This also includes any endorsement of products, services or companies, or recommendation and promotion of them.

5. Complaint Mechanism

Anyone who has been approached or solicited as part of a Diocese of Westminster's fundraising appeal, campaign or other event, has the right to register a complaint with a reviewer independent of the fundraising programme. Complaints must be specific and cannot be lodged anonymously.

In order to conduct a full and factual investigation of a complaint, and to be able to respond to it, complaints therefore must be submitted in writing and may be addressed to: Vicar General, Diocese of Westminster, Archbishop's House, Ambrosden Avenue, London SW1P 1QJ.

6. Conclusion

Fundraising is an integral part of our work but it is a means to an end: building up God's Kingdom through service to God's people. Fundraising is not the objective of the Church. The Diocese of Westminster is committed to exhibiting the best of fundraising practices in all its activities, showing respect for people first and foremost, and secondly, the best stewardship of resources given to us voluntarily. The Diocese is dependent on donated funds, and on the generosity of parishioners. We all shall strive to embrace a greater and more exacting stewardship.

Dated: 18 November 2015