



IHM Endowment History and Principles

When former IHM pastor Msgr. Edward Bier died in 1985, the parish received just over \$32,000 in donations in his honor. For several years the parish considered appropriate ways to use those gifts. Finally, Msgr. Bier's successor, Rev. Robert Gille, suggested that a parish endowment would be an appropriate and lasting way to honor Msgr. Bier's service to the parish. On May 18, 1992 the decree was signed and the IHM Endowment Fund was legally established.

In addition to Diocesan Administrator Rev. George Wirz, Diocesan Vicar General Rev. Raymond Klaas and IHM pastor the Rev. Robert Gille, five IHM parish members signed the decree. Those five were parish trustees Anthony Bonano, Jr. and Loyal Sargent and parish members Joe Gogola, Jim Busse and Dan Coyne. As of this writing three of the five are still alive, Busse, Coyne and Gogola. During the summer of 2019 those three were asked to memorialize the core tenants of the endowment, its operations and the principles under which those who established the endowment felt it should operate. After a series of communications, the three agreed there were several core principles and understandings when the endowment was established and that original \$32,252 deposit was made to the endowment account. Those core beliefs were:

- 1) The Endowment Fund would be controlled by an independent board and not by the Bishop, Diocese, pastor, parish council, finance committee or the parish trustees. This principle to not be influenced by the operational needs of the parish was a pillar for the organization. It established the principle that the endowment donations and growth were not seen as being accessible for use in the annual operating budget of the parish. As stated in the decree, the purpose of the endowment is to support the religious education mission of the parish by providing **“supplemental funding of programs and services.”**
- 2) While limiting endowment support to religious education, it was deemed at the start to use a broad definition of the term “religious education” to allow future endowment boards to address current parish priorities. In 1992, the board priorities were the IHM School, religious education programs, and priest vocations. Over the years the fund has supported areas including RCIA, adult enrichment, library materials, retreats, vocations, and scholarships. A recollection by board member Dan Coyne summed up the board feeling that the endowment was for “teaching not buildings.”
- 3) It was the intent of those who signed the decree that the endowment fund would be managed by parish members for the benefit of parish members. While the Madison Diocese regulations directed that the Bishop be the chairman and the current pastor be vice-chairman of the board, it was the full intent from the start that the parish members would be in charge of the endowment

fund, encourage its growth, and determine, when the time came, how funds were to be distributed. Over the lifetime of the endowment, the board has communicated to the parish that parish members, not the Diocese, would oversee their donations and it would be parish members making the decision on how best to invest and distribute the funds. (Note: In 2017, when the endowment board was seeking a new investment advisor, it interviewed those affiliated with the Diocese of Madison Endowment with the possibility of folding the IHM Endowment into the Diocese fund to be managed by the Diocese. Recognizing such a decision would be contrary to promises made to donors over the years regarding parish member oversight of investments and distributions and for several other reasons, the board voted unanimously against the change. See IHM Endowment minutes 3/23/17)

- 4) The early focus of the fund was to be on growth through donations and investments and with no distributions the fund would be allowed to quickly grow to critical mass. The long-term goal was a \$1,000,000 fund balance. Fund performance and investment strategy were to be reviewed semi-annually by the board.
- 5) Parish members were frequently reminded that their contributions to the endowment fund would never be spent. Annual requests for funding religious education activities would be funded only by earnings from those contributions. Donors were assured their monetary donations would continue to support the parish long after the donor's death.

In addition to the beliefs listed above, in its early years the board held onto another belief which dictated its distribution plans. While started with just over \$32,000, the board believed the fund could grow to \$1,000,000 and established that as a long-range goal. In doing so, the board determined they should be very conservative in its distributions and therefore the first annual distribution of \$2,000 came in 2001, the 10th year of fund. Through continued support by the parish and solid investment strategy by the board, the fund reached that \$1,000,000 goal in 2016.

Even though the 1992 endowment decree was updated with minor adjustments in 2009 and 2010, these principles remain at the center of its beliefs. In one form or another, they have been communicated to parish members often over the years. These were the promises made to IHM parish members who were assured these principles would honor and safeguard the legacy of their gifts and fulfill their expectations that their donations would support the religious education efforts of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish.