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Aim of new Chicago fundraising campaign to teach all 'who Christ is'

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The Chicago archdiocese's new "To Teach Who Christ Is" campaign is "well named" because it describes exactly the mission of the Catholic church, said Cardinal Francis George.

It's "what we do -- we teach the world who Christ is," he said.

The three-year campaign will raise $350 million for Catholic education and faith formation. The funds will support archdiocesan Catholic schools, religious education for children and teens, adult faith formation and capital needs for parishes and schools.

"The Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Chicago and our faith formation programs make their case in the lives of those transformed by them," George said in a statement.

"The alumni of our schools and parishes are living and working in Chicago, the suburbs and around the world. They are the reason, and the winning conclusion, to the need to conduct the 'To Teach Who Christ Is' campaign. The campaign is well named. That is our mission."

The archdiocese launched the new initiative at a press conference Wednesday at St. Stanislaus Kostka School.

According to press materials, the "To Teach Who Christ Is" campaign is an archdiocesan-wide, parish-based effort that will be rolled out in parishes over a three-year period.

It has a major gift component that has already brought in $82.5 million, or approximately 24 percent of the total.

Press materials about the campaign said that administrators, educators, pastors and staff gave their input on the priorities for allocating the funds. Those include: $150 million for scholarships; $8 million to enhance programs at Catholic schools; $10 million to strengthen religious education programs; $2 million to develop and pilot new approaches to religious education and faith formation; $30 million for specific capital needs in Catholic schools and related parish facilities; and $150 million for parish-specific needs through the parish-based portion of the campaign.

The total goal for parishes is $250 million with 60 percent of the funds, or $150 million, raised to remain in the parishes for their needs and 40 percent, or $100 million, to be distributed through the archdiocese.

"The spirit and the substance" of the initiative can be seen in the archdiocese's mission to generate "sufficient funding to help all of us teach God's word and the beauty of our Catholic faith," said Chicago Auxiliary Bishop Francis Kane, the campaign's general chair.

George also named Chicago Auxiliary Bishop George Rassas as episcopal liaison for major gifts and James Perry as chair of major gifts. Perry is managing director for Madison Dearborn Partners, a private equity firm in Chicago, and a member of the archdiocese of Chicago's Board of Catholic Schools.

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