

March 2, 2026

The Most Reverend John Charles Wester
Archbishop of Santa Fe
4000 St. Joseph Place NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120

Your Excellency,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed Archdiocese of Santa Fe Capital Campaign as described in the brochure and letter sent by mail to me recently. I have reviewed the material, discussed its contents with fellow parishioners and prayed for wisdom in understanding the scope and intent of the proposed effort. The brochure speaks in general terms about the areas of investment but lacks details as to implementation. In short, a generic WHAT is offered, but no specifics on HOW. Consequently, I find that I am unable to endorse the campaign until more details are provided. Let me elaborate.

I am a practicing Catholic, a parishioner at St. John XXIII Catholic Community where I serve as a Lector and Eucharistic Minister. I also serve in the Guardian Ministry where I and others assist in planning and supporting funeral masses and memorials. I am now and have been for several years the Volunteer Coordinator for the Annual Catholic Campaign (ACA). Having joined the Catholic Church through RCIA in 1990 I served as the RCIA (now OCIA) coordinator for three years in the mid-90's. Under Fr. Ark I also served as Chair of the Pastoral Committee. I offer this context in the hope of convincing you that I take my faith seriously, and have put that faith into action.

So here are some areas of concern:

SCOPE AND TIMING

I note that you have announced plans to retire. As a retiree myself I wish you the best. You certainly deserve some peace and tranquility after the difficult circumstances you have weathered in your time as Archbishop. In my professional career I had the privilege of executive leadership in a secular role (>5000 employees, ~\$3B program funds). I know how important it is for a senior leader to create a vision and culture for his followers to embrace. I find it odd that you would roll out this Capital Campaign in what may be your final months of service. Surely the new Archbishop will want the prerogative of laying out his vision instead of, however noble, inheriting one from his predecessor. Perhaps you already know who your successor is and have coordinated with him. If so, then you have laid out a noble start. If not, please consider that you may be constraining his ability to craft the path he feels the Spirit has commanded him to follow.

INTEGRATION

As I mentioned I volunteer to coordinate our parish's involvement in the Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA). The Capital Campaign (CC) would seem to duplicate many

of the ACA activities. How will fundraising for ACA be affected by the CC? Will the CC replace the ACA and, if so, in what manner? How will the weekly offering and designated offerings be affected? How do you explain the need for \$5M over three years for vocations when, as your CC brochure states, the cost/seminarian is \$70K/yr and you hope to grow to 15 seminarians. That would require about \$1M in funds/yr, plus some additional for administration. You already collect about \$900K/yr from various sources [about \$475K/yr from ACA, about \$320K from Catholic Foundation, and about \$130K/yr from 2nd collections] (all numbers from websites for Archdiocese of Santa Fe and Catholic Foundation for 2025). Where will the additional funds collected from the CC go?

GOVERNANCE

Some of my concerns relate to the proposed governance of the campaign. Will parishes be given fund raising targets in a manner similar to ACA? Will donations be taxed? Will donations be protected from future civil litigation/bankruptcy proceedings? How will the campaign be administered by the Archdiocese: a new committee? A committee to include parish representatives? Finally, will performance targets be established to gauge effectiveness (e.g., in three years X number of new seminarians)?

ACCOUNTABILITY/TRANSPARENCY

How will progress during the campaign be communicated to parishes? Will third-party audits be performed annually and be made public? What is the feedback mechanism for course correction? Given the recent history of corruption in our Archdiocese it is vitally important that a focus on transparency be at the forefront of your strategy.

LONG TERM RECURRING BURDEN

An investment of \$23M (which is actually \$46M if 50% is returned to the parishes) will surely affect the ongoing operations of the Archdiocese after the three year period. For example, restoring some of the Ministries (including adding new staff) will likely increase the baseline operating expense of the Archdiocese. Will that lead to an increase in taxes? What is the plan for after the campaign?

SURVEY BIAS

I have experience in seeking feedback from a constituency. The survey included in your recent mailing is strongly biased toward an outcome that favors the campaign and as such may not provide the honest feedback you certainly need with so bold a campaign. A simple example: there is no option to NOT support the campaign. You can say that in Question #11, but those comments don't have the same impact as a question posed as yes or no where a numerical percentage can be calculated as to support, or not.

REALITY

In my role as ACA Coordinator I have insight into the mechanics of fundraising at our parish. We have done quite well over the past few years, regularly exceeding our ACA targets and benefitting from refunds. But the burden of support has consistently fallen onto about 200 of the 1200 families registered in our parish. At

\$23M over 3 years the annual goal would be a bit over \$7.5M. If the CC is managed like the ACA, then one might suppose we would be given a target of about 2.5% (that's been our share of ACA for the past few years). That would translate into a donation target for the CC of about \$184,000 or \$368,000 if 50% is to be returned to the parish. Wow, that would in turn be an average donation across 200 families of just shy of \$2000 per year. When my fellow parishioners see these numbers they are aghast that the Archdiocese would pursue such a fundraising effort. But, of course, we don't know the details.

My intent in the above discourse is to make the point that many questions remain in how the campaign will be conducted. It is my hope that you and your staff will take the time to develop specific plans so that a parishioner can take comfort in knowing that the flock is on a reasonable path to success.

I would be happy to discuss my concerns further in person if that would be appropriate. For the record I did express these concerns to about 70 parishioners at a town hall meeting in our parish. Suffice to say my concerns were and remain shared by all present.

In closing, I implore you to spend some time developing specific implementation plans so that your flock can make informed decisions about whether or not to embrace this Capital Campaign.

Respectfully yours in Christ,

Jerry L. McDowell

cc: Fr. Tai, Pastor, St. John XXIII Catholic Community