

Three dioceses slate work-force cutbacks

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — At least three U.S. dioceses announced personnel cutbacks this spring to reduce or avoid deficits.

• The Archdiocese of St. Louis, which reported a \$5.5 million deficit in fiscal year 1991, issued an 11-point consolidation and reduction program as the first step in a three-year plan to reduce its deficit by \$2.5 million.

• The Phoenix diocese, looking at a projected \$1.9 million deficit next fiscal year, laid off 16 people — 13 percent of its total diocesan staff — and levied an additional 1 percent diocesan tax on the revenues of all parishes.

• In North Carolina, the Raleigh diocese said it will lay off 10 of its 100 diocesan employees and restructure diocesan offices, reducing the current six administrative divisions to four.

In St. Louis, the current archdiocesan office and program reductions are part of a long-range plan that could include significant parish changes as well.

The North St. Louis Deanery Council recently approved a recommendation to Archbishop John L. May that he reorganize parishes in that area, making 11 parishes out of 26.

The Phoenix diocese's decision to eliminate 16 positions — 10 held by lay people, four by women religious and two by priests — comes on top of 19 diocesan-level jobs already eliminated in the past three years through layoffs or attrition.

Among areas directly affected by the new cuts are the diocesan tribunal, worship office; catechetical ministry; youth ministry; family life office; Indian ministry; hospital chaplains; divorced and separated ministry; and the Kino Institute, a training center for

catechists and other adult leaders.

Diocesan financial officer Monsignor Richard W. Moyer said a number of factors — especially Arizona's depressed real estate market — had forced the additional cuts.

Aggressive efforts to sell unneeded property had brought little success because of market conditions, he said. A plan to sell the property of former Gerard High School for nearly \$7 million fell through when the buyer could not obtain financing.

Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien of Phoenix said that keeping a balanced budget is part of "responsible stewardship of donated funds."

Many other Catholic dioceses and religious denominations — as well as government entities and commercial enterprises around the country — are facing similar struggles, he said.

Employees to be laid off in Raleigh were informed individually just before a March 31 meeting of diocesan staff. At that meeting, Father Joseph G. Vetter, diocesan chancellor, announced the reorganization plan.

The laid-off employees were given three weeks' notice, but are to receive full salary and benefits through June 30 as part of a severance package.

The reorganization proposals are part of a three-year plan and budget for diocesan agencies. The diocesan Administrative Council recently mailed out the plan/budget as a recommendation to priests and four diocesan councils that must be consulted about such decisions.

Father Vetter said the reorganization plan could still be modified by the diocesan councils, but "we felt an obligation to let employees know as soon as possible if their positions were about to be phased out. In addition, if they are to receive severance pay, it



REENACTMENT OF THE CRUCIFIXION — Faith healer Amparo "Mother Paring" Santos, 50, grimaces as two men drive four-inch nails through her palms in Kapitangan, Philippines, during an April 17 The reenactment of the crucifixion. Such re-enactments remain popular in the Good Friday commemorations of certain cultures.

must be during the current fiscal year, which ends June 30."

He said economic conditions have caused the diocese to lose other revenues. The diocese's investment portfolio earned \$100,000 less than was originally forecast, he said.

Nearly half the funding for the diocese's \$3.2 million budget comes from the Bishop's Annual Appeal, but at the request of pastors who were concerned

about the effects of the recession on their people, the diocese lowered its goal for the 1992 appeal by 3 percent.

"Personally, I have found this decision the most difficult that I have made in my time in the Diocese of Raleigh," said Bishop F. Joseph Gossman. "I know there were not any other options, but that did not make the decision any easier."



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