

Diocese names new executive director of Catholic Foundation of Rhode Island

Catholic Foundation now operates under Area of Mission 600: The Secretariat for Planning and Financial Services

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PROVIDENCE — This summer, the Diocese of Providence not only welcomed Rich Popovic to the new position of executive director for the Catholic Foundation of Rhode Island, but with the approval of Bishop Thomas J. Tobin, the operational structure of the Catholic Foundation of Rhode Island underwent a process of review and now operates as a separate department within the diocesan Area of Mission 600: The Secretariat for Planning and Financial Services.

Msgr. Raymond Bastia, vicar of the diocesan Office of Planning and Financial Services, offered his congratulations to Popovic on his new appointment as director of the Catholic Foundation adding that he was the candidate selected through an extensive search process and had served as interim director through the time of the pandemic.

"Rich is really taking on a new position for the diocese," said Msgr. Bastia. "Under Rich's guidance the past year saw a great deal of effort by present dedicated board members to draft their new vision and internal governance. One major result is that a separate department has been

created for the Catholic Foundation within the Area of Mission 600, or the Secretariat for Planning and Financial Services. In actuality, while building on the good work of past directors, Rich is the first director of this new, separate office."

This is more than a nominal change, Msgr. Bastia explained, as the activities of the Foundation will be substantially increased and staffing added. Programs to cultivate planned gifts, increased donor outreach and interaction and the establishment of new board subcommittees will be among these changes. Through increased representation the board of the Catholic Foundation will also have more direct participation in the discussions undertaken by the Diocesan Investment Advisory Committee.

"It is an exciting time for the work of the Foundation," said Msgr. Bastia. "I am grateful to Rich for his role in getting us to this point. I look forward now to his time of capable leadership and interaction with the Foundation Board. I feel strongly that it will one day form his legacy to the diocese."

Popovic began his career at the diocese in 2014 as the associate director of Stewardship and Development. With the departure of Andrea Krupp, Popovic was named interim Director for the Catholic Foundation. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the selection process for the permanent director was delayed. Popovic assumed the role of executive director effective July 1, 2021.

Popovich shared that the Catholic Foundation of Rhode Island currently has approximately 400 endowed funds and over \$130 million in assets under management. It is one of the top fifteen Catholic Foundations in the nation for this category.

"With that being said, there is always room to improve and grow," said Popovic. "Simply put, we need to be more visible. Our marketing efforts must be increased to better reach our existing donor base along with more stakeholders in the legal and wealth management communities."

The new executive director added that Catholic Foundation has positively impacted how the church serves its people in the Diocese of Providence.

"The gifts of our charitable donors touch every part of the church. Our funds assist with social ministry, seminarians, Catholic education, evangelical outreach and physical maintenance of parishes. These types of financial support overlap with one another to make our people, parishes and communities more effective for both the short and long terms."

He also offered his sincere thanks to the Board of Advisors for their guidance, adding that the board is one of the most invested and active groups in the diocese.

The Catholic Foundation also assists individuals and organizations with responsible Christian stewardship, he said.

"Our role is to assist both existing and prospective donors in their philanthropic desires within the faith," said Popovic. "A key rule is to always understand donor intent. There is nothing more important than this. Our outreach does not only mean asking for a gift, but also establishing consistent communication that acknowledges their decision to give to Catholic Foundation."

To learn more about the Catholic Foundation of Rhode Island, please visit dioceseofprovidence.org/catholic-foundation-of-rhode-island.

Museum of Newport Irish History unveils historical informational sign at Barney Street Cemetery

NEWPORT — Museum of Newport Irish History members and friends gathered on Saturday, Sept. 18, to celebrate the unveiling of a new historical informational sign at the Barney Street Cemetery, located at the corner of Barney and Mt. Vernon Streets. The cemetery is the final resting place of many of Newport's earliest Irish immigrants. The park-like setting on which it stands was the site of Rhode Island's first Catholic church and oldest parish, established in 1828, the forerunner of today's St. Mary's Church on Spring Street, which was consecrated in 1849 to "The Holy Name of Mary, Our Lady of the Isle."

Museum board members Mike Slein and Carol Lepley spoke on behalf of the organization to the group of approximately 30. Board President Slein recounted the story of the site, so central to the history of the early Irish in Newport. He also reminded attendees that the Museum of Newport Irish History restored the cemetery through an agreement with the Diocese of Providence and St. Mary's Parish. When the restoration was completed, the cemetery was rededicated by the Diocese in March 1999, and the Museum continues to maintain and beautify the site with dedicated volunteers, many of whom were on hand.

The new informational sign was made possible by a gift from Carol Lepley and the Lepley Family, given in memory of her husband Steve, a longtime member of the Museum's board of directors who passed away in December 2017. Mrs. Lepley memorialized her husband in her comments and spoke of the importance of the cemetery site to the community, her husband, her family and many members.

After the conclusion of the ceremony, the group reconvened at Ancient Order of Hibernian Hall on Wellington Avenue to continue the celebration and to honor Jack Curran and Peter Martin, two retiring members of the Museum Board of Directors, for their many years of dedicated service.

Newport area residents and visitors are encouraged to stop by the Barney Street Cemetery to explore the site, view the new sign and the gravestones, many of which reflect the county and parish in Ireland where the deceased were born. Community members are also invited to visit the Museum's Interpretive Center at 648 Lower Thames Street, which is open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m., through October 31, and at other times by appointment.

Visit newportirishhistory.org to learn more about the Museum of Newport Irish History.