



"This aging of the baby boom generation is likely to impact every aspect of modern life."

Archbishop Harry Flynn, "A Time to Reap"
pastoral letter on aging

Local

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News from around the archdiocese

Archdiocese launches new senior service organization

By Maria Wiering
The Catholic Spirit

The baby boom generation has always done everything in droves — entering kindergarten, entering college and entering the workforce.

They'll soon be entering the golden years in similar fashion.

In an effort to serve an aging Catholic population, the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis is launching Catholic Senior Services — an "umbrella" support organization for the elderly that will use the local network of Catholic senior care organizations and parish programs to help communities address the anticipated need.

Four senior service organizations — Catholic Eldercare, St. Therese of New Hope, St. Therese Southwest and Franciscan Health Community — will work with the archdiocese. The organizations will network with parishes to create more senior housing and establish programs that provide a continuum of physical, spiritual and social care for the church's elderly population.

One of the first objectives of Catholic Senior Services is to increase housing for seniors, said Dan Gannon, CEO of Catholic Senior Services, effective Aug. 1. Ideally, this housing will be built on or near parish property, so the elderly can stay connected to parishes as they age, Gannon said.

Catholic Senior Services will seek ways to accommodate projected increases in senior housing demand by helping the elderly live longer in their homes with the help of parish communities and community partners.

Surfing the age wave

In the post-World War II years between 1946 and 1964, the United States and other countries experienced a sharp increase in birth rates — a "baby boom." Today, the term "baby boomer" is generally applied to people between the ages of 44 and 62. This demographic accounts for nearly 20 percent of the U.S. population.

Right now, the baby boom generation is beginning to reach retirement age. According to the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the elder population will significantly change by 2030:

- One in four Minnesotans will be 65 or older.
- The number of Minnesotans over age 85 will triple.

Much of this population is better-educated, more technologically adept and living healthier lifestyles than previous generations, according to "A Time to Reap," Archbishop Harry Flynn's new pastoral letter on aging.

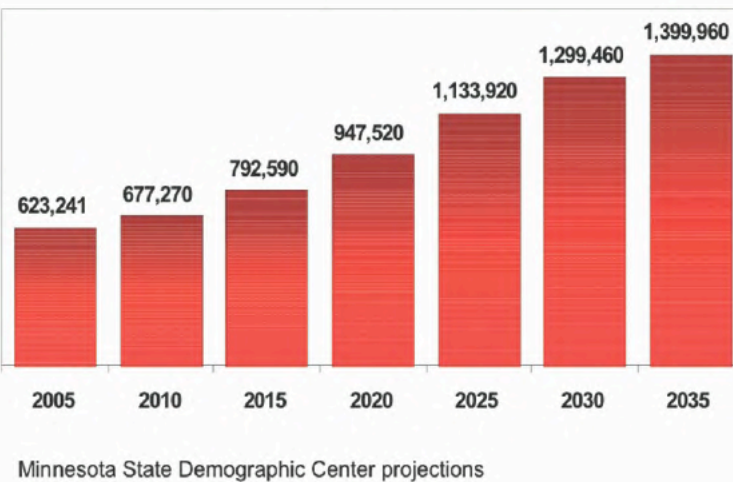
However, much of the population — the aging baby boomers and those who will support them — is not prepared for the impending "age wave."

More senior housing will be needed to accommodate the needs of the community, more services will need to be made available for elders choosing to live at home, and resources need to be available to help them stay connected to their community, Gannon said.

In 1998, the state of Minnesota released "Project 2030: Aging Initiative Briefing Book." In response to some of the health care issues it raised, several local Catholic health care providers — Catholic Eldercare, St. Therese of New Hope and St. Therese Southwest — met to consider their response to the projected increase in elders.

Already, these long-term care organizations were facing challenges — including financial challenges — in their care of senior citizens. They realized that they needed the help of local Catholics and archdiocesan leaders, said Mary Broderick, president and CEO of Catholic Eldercare.

Projected Minnesota population ages 65+



The archbishop on aging

"A Time to Reap" is Archbishop Harry Flynn's new pastoral letter on aging that will be available in mid-August at parishes; from Catholic Eldercare, St. Therese of New Hope, St. Therese Southwest and Franciscan Health Community; and on the Web sites of the archdiocese (www.ArchSPM.org) and Catholic Senior Services (www.CatholicSeniorServices.org).

The letter focuses on the dignity of the elderly person, changing demographics and the archdiocese's response.

The letter also introduces Catholic Senior Services and explains its role in the church's mission.

In addressing the elderly's right to basic necessities, Archbishop Flynn states that it is part of the church's communal responsibility to provide for that right.

He quotes Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical "Deus Caritas Est": "As a community, the church must practice love. Love, thus, needs to be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the community."

Addressing the challenge

It's been more than three years since the three organizations first approached Archbishop Flynn, requesting his leadership for an initiative to serve the elderly. Since then, a task force examined the issue, a board formed and Catholic Senior Services was born.

Catholic Senior Services will operate as a separate corporate outreach of the archdiocese, run similarly to the Catholic Community Foundation, Catholic Charities and the Catholic Finance Corporation, with its own board and financial resources.

Catholic Senior Services currently has four affiliated organizations: Catholic Eldercare in Minneapolis, St. Therese Southwest in Hopkins, St. Therese of New Hope in New Hope and Franciscan Health Community in St. Paul.

While remaining separate, the affiliates plan to collaborate with the archdiocese and each other. That will allow the organizations to keep costs down, pool resources and share best practices, Gannon said.

The archdiocese plays a key role.

"The archdiocese can put together the resources that will enable the outreach to seniors to be very successful," said Bishop Richard Pates, who has overseen Cath-

olic Senior Services' development. One of the greatest resources is the built-in network of parishes, he said.

"The church is committed to the reverence and value of each person at every age, and this is the identity that we really want to accord the elderly," he added.

The organization is focused not only on meeting physical needs, such as health care and housing, but also spiritual and social needs, he said, which the archdiocese has the means to address.

"All of these connections work together to keep somebody aligned with the community, and that's really where quality of life comes in," Broderick said.

Joe Stanislav, president and CEO of Franciscan Health Community, said that "partnering with the other affiliates and the archdiocese really helps us to extend our mission and to make Catholic health care available to greater numbers of seniors in the archdiocese."

Without partnering, Franciscan Health Community wouldn't have the resources alone to address the age wave, he said. "I don't think any of the affiliates could."

Partnering also will help the providers to identify gaps

Get to know Gannon

Dan Gannon, 41, is the CEO of Catholic Senior Services. He formerly worked for 16 years at West Publishing, which is now Thompson-West, where he managed new product development. West compiles databases helpful to lawyers and law students.



GANNON

While working at West, he grew in his ability "to pull people with various skill sets and experience and abilities across the company together to build a product," he said. He also traveled around the country to sell the product.

"Working with [Catholic Senior Services] with these affiliate corporations, there's going to be the same activity," he said.

Gannon graduated from the University of St. Thomas and William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul. His experience at St. Thomas, one year of which he spent at St. John Vianney Seminary, helped him grow in his Catholic faith, he said.

"I've always wanted to use my skills in the church more explicitly," he said. Gannon is a diaconate candidate for the Diocese of LaCrosse, Wis.

Gannon is a member of St. Mary in Prescott, Wis. He lives in Prescott with his wife, Lisa, and their four children, Michael, Patrick, Clare and Marie.

