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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DIOCESAN STATEMENT ON ST. JAMES PARISH, KANSAS OHIO:

Following months of consultation considering the reconfiguration of the Diocese of Toledo parishes, Bishop Leonard Blair met with parishioners at St. James Parish in Kansas, Ohio in October, 2004. When Bishop Blair announced his decision to close the parish effective July, 2005, its former parishioners appealed his decision to Rome. A Vatican decree in November, 2005 affirmed Bishop Blair's decision to close St. James Parish, and directed that the closed parish's property go to the two surviving nearby parishes. Bishop Blair met again with a delegation from the closed parish in January, 2006, asking for suggestions for the building's future use for the common good, but did not receive any suggestions. Despite its closure last year, the diocese allowed members of the parish to hold a 24 hour vigil in the building for several months.

Recently, legal counsel representing the diocese and members of the parish agreed upon a date and time when former members of the parish could remove their personal belongings from the building. Just prior to that date, diocesan counsel was informed that the former parishioners objected to the diocese removing any parish property from the building for safekeeping, because the parishioners claimed that they were entitled to all parish property. The former parishioners have filed a lawsuit claiming that they own all the parish property, and a request of an accounting of funds, which still remain in a diocesan deposit account in the approximate amount of \$77,957.60. All funds currently in the account of the closed parish were transferred to the diocese to be held until a decision is made between the diocese and former members of the parish as to the disposition of the funds.

The Diocese is confident that church and civil law have been fully satisfied in this matter. The former parishioners of St. James will receive their personal belongings, and possibly additional requested sacred goods if those items are not needed in other parishes, and the funds of the former parish will be properly distributed in the interests of the local parishes. Civil courts generally defer to the internal decisions of church tribunals such as this, especially where administrative appeals uphold the ecclesiastical decision, under a separation of church and state principle.

The leadership of the diocese continues to pray for all those who experience parish closings, and encourages those parishioners to make the journey to a new parish community and find comfort through their faith and prayer.

The Diocese of Toledo, established April 15, 1910 encompasses 8222 square miles in a mixture of urban and rural areas that spans 19 counties across Northwest Ohio, serving 309,828 Catholics. The diocese includes Allen, Crawford, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Henry, Huron, Lucas, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Richland, Sandusky, Seneca, Van Wert, Williams, Wood and Wyandot counties.

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