

Giving Foundation grants: One of Bishop Tafoya's favorite things to do

By Steven Chargin, Executive Director

With the help and support of the faithful, Bishop Arthur N. Tafoya most certainly accomplished many things for his diocese.

Perhaps one of the most enduring aspects of his legacy will be the creation of the Catholic Diocese of Pueblo Foundation. As presently organized, Bishop Tafoya established the Catholic Foundation in 1995, and by the grace of God it has grown over the years in many and varied ways.

Putting his love and care for the diocese into action, Bishop Tafoya wanted to be sure that there would always be a source of grant funds for all parishes, missions and other Catholic groups, particularly those in outlying areas where financial and material resources were scarce. Relying on the generosity of many donors, the Catholic Foundation has been able to help repair churches and schools, provide funding for religious education materials, assist immigrants, and offer our youth the opportunity to grow in their faith through numerous conferences and events. Little did Bishop Tafoya know that the seeds of faith he planted would turn into over two million dollars in grant awards for these and many other programs.

Former Executive Director Kathleen M. Tillman worked very closely with Bishop Tafoya, and she saw first-hand how much the Catholic Foundation meant to him. "Bishop Tafoya was so generous with his efforts to grow the Foundation. He especially wanted grants to be spread across the diocese to various parishes and missions. It was important to him that the Foundation be present in all the communities. I would sit in his office with him for hours, and we would go through each request and discuss the needs. He would give me his thoughts and then I would compile a recommendation to the board. It made him so happy to give the funds away. I think it was one of his favorite things to do."

Kathleen's time with Bishop Tafoya also allowed her to see a lighter side of this good and faithful shepherd. "One thing people might not have known about Bishop was that he had a great sense of humor and an easy laugh. Some of my fondest memories were driving all over the diocese with him to get to Foundation meetings or to meet with volunteers. The hours I spent in the car with him were so enjoyable. Plus he knew every little 'locals only' restaurant in each town. That is where he always wanted to eat."

Not only did the Catholic Foundation address many material needs, but matters of faith were always close to Bishop Tafoya's heart as well. As recounted by Ron Diodosio, one of the Catholic Foundation's earliest board members, "Bishop Tafoya really wanted to bring some of the Poor Clare Sisters to Pueblo to pray for vocations and other needs, so he challenged the board to raise the necessary funds for their cloister, including a wall around their convent. The board knew it was important and we just couldn't let him down, so we all put the money in ourselves. "

On behalf of all our Board of Directors, executive directors, staff and grant recipients, past and present, the Catholic Foundation will forever be grateful for Bishop Tafoya's inspired leadership and vision. May he rest in God's holy peace.