

Pensacola-Tallahassee  
Diocesan Council of Catholic Women

A History of the Burse Club  
&  
Other Related Information



## **Pensacola-Tallahassee Diocesan Council of Catholic Women** **History of the Burse Club**

What is a *Burse*? According to catholicculture.org, “A burse is the name for an endowment or foundation fund especially for scholarships for candidates for the priesthood (Etym. Latin bursa, purse or pouch)”. Somewhere along the line, a brilliant idea was born. Here is what we know...

In 1953, when our diocese was part of the Mobile Diocese, a small group of women from Sacred Heart Parish in Pensacola formed a *Burse Club*. This Burse Club was established as a means to lend financial assistance toward the education of future priests for our diocese. These women would go from house to house each month to collect their dollar, chat and interact with the families. They knew that the dollars they collected would eventually add up to something great.

When the Pensacola-Tallahassee Diocese was formed in 1975, Bishop Rene H. Gracida asked Katheryn Geist, who was a pillar at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart and a founding member of their Ladies Sodality, to continue the Burse Club under the auspices of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women. Today, there is a Burse Club collection in most every parish in our diocese.

In 1981, the annual Burse Club collection yielded \$31,000.00. In 1998, the amount broke \$100,000.00 for the first time. Nineteen years later, in 2017, the Burse Club check totaled \$206,860.00. Over the years, the Burse Club has collected more than \$5,000,000.00. Also worth noting, there is no overhead associated with the Burse Club. Furthermore, the Pastoral Center graciously provides the Burse Club brochures each year. Every dollar collected goes toward the financial support of our diocesan seminarians.

Contributions to the Burse Club are placed in the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee Burse Fund. The Burse Fund complements the diocesan operating budget where the education of seminarians is, according to Bishop Gregory L. Parkes, “the largest line item in the budget.” It costs the diocese \$55,000.00 per year to educate one seminarian (i.e. tuition, room and board). After receiving a graduate degree, seven years of seminary are required. This equates to \$385,000.00 in education expenses for one seminarian to become ordained into the priesthood.

One way to become a member of the Burse Club is simply to complete the form on the Burse Club brochure and return the form to your parish along with your donation. Brochures are available through your parish. You would also be considered a member using your designated collection envelope or donation to the annual Burse Club collection, usually in July. Some parishes collect for the Burse Club once a month with volunteers taking contributions before and after Masses. Others use a monthly envelope system. All collections are staffed by women of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women. In addition to financial support, Burse Club members are also encouraged to offer prayerful support for seminarians. All priests ordained for our diocese, since 1953, have benefitted from the financial and prayerful support provided by Burse Club members.

Each year in the spring, the Bishop, the Director of Seminarians and Vocations, seminarians and Burse Club Parish Directors come together for the Burse Club Luncheon. This is an opportunity to meet the seminarians and share in fellowship. Updated Burse Club brochures for distribution are handed out at the luncheon as well.

The Diocesan Council of Catholic Women is proud of the dedication of its members and the many parishioners who contribute to the Burse Club. Each year, at the annual Diocesan Council of Catholic Women Convention, the Burse Club check is presented to the Bishop at either the luncheon or the banquet dinner. Most recently, the 2018 Burse Club check was presented to Bishop William A. Wack for the amount of \$182,876.00.

Our former bishop, Bishop Gregory L. Parkes announced the establishment of a Burse Club in the Diocese of St. Petersburg in 2018. Other Florida dioceses have asked for information on creating a Burse Club.

The Burse Club has been and continues to be a great gift to our seminarians and our diocese. The candidates entering seminary whose call to serve is affirmed and blessed will be the future priests who serve our diocese. The Diocesan Council of Catholic Women is both privileged and honored to fulfill our first bishop's wish, Bishop Renee H. Gracida, in 1975 to continue the work of the Burse Club. We do not know if the women from Sacred Heart Parish who went door to door are still with us today. Surely, wherever they are, they would be very pleased knowing that their idea grew into this significant financial support for the future priests in our diocese.

### **Burse Club Mass Cards & Burse Masses**

Burse Club Mass cards are available through most parishes either through the parish office or through an affiliate of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women. Burse Mass cards have a beautiful image of Our Lady of Good Counsel, the patroness of the Council of Catholic Women. Those enrolled are remembered perpetually in the Masses and prayers offered for its members at a monthly Mass celebrated by the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. Mass cards are offered for a donation of \$10.00 and are provided by the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women.

For more information, contact:

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--Sue Weathersbee, Diocesan Council of Catholic Women Eastern Division Burse Club Director  
(850) 224-1965, sueweathersbee@comcast.net

### **Burse Club Memorials & Gift Donations**

Memorials and gift donations in memory of a loved one or to celebrate a special occasion are most welcome. For more information, contact your Parish Burse Club Director or one of the Directors listed above.

Compiled by

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