Communicating For Christ Forever: PR Lessons Learned from the Roman Catholic Church’s Rebranding of Robert H. Schuller’s Crystal Cathedral

Douglas J. Swanson, Ed.D APR
Terri Manley, California State University, Fullerton
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Douglas J. Swanson, Ed.D, APR
Terri Manley, M.A.

California State University, Fullerton
Department of Communications
800 N. State College Blvd.
Fullerton, CA 92831
(657) 278-8607

Dr. Swanson is Professor of Communications and Terri Manley is a recent M.A. graduate of the Department of Communications. Correspondence to:

dswanson@fullerton.edu

RUNNING HEAD: Communicating *For Christ Forever*
Abstract

In 2010-2011, Robert H. Schuller’s internationally renowned Crystal Cathedral Ministry endured a series of crises resulting in bankruptcy and dissolution. The collapse allowed the Roman Catholic Diocese to make a property acquisition unprecedented in U.S. religious history. This public relations case study drawing on news media content analysis and interviews with campaign planners profiles a $100 million For Christ Forever marketing campaign aimed at transforming the property into the most significant Catholic center in the Western hemisphere. The case study shows how the Catholic Diocese used compliance-gaining strategies and diffused public criticism during an extraordinary event in the history of American Christianity. The review concludes five best practices recommendations applicable in a variety of public relations situations involving nonprofits in transition.
Introduction

The $52 million bankruptcy-forced sale of Rev. Robert H. Schuller’s Crystal Cathedral to the Roman Catholic Church is unprecedented and noteworthy in several ways. It is one of the single largest and most expensive property acquisitions undertaken by a religious organization in the United States. The purchase came about as a consequence of the sudden and embarrassing collapse of what was formerly one of the world’s most wealthy and prestigious Protestant Christian televangelist ministries.

The acquisition of the Crystal Cathedral to establish a new home for Catholics in Southern California necessitated the development of a complex and extraordinary communications campaign to inform and persuade. The campaign employed many of the interpersonal compliance gaining ideas first espoused by Marwell and Schmitt (1967) as it targeted low-income, immigrant, non-English speaking Catholics to fund the purchase of a prestige property that, to some, is more recognized as a tourist attraction than as a house of worship (USA Today 10 Best Attractions and Activities, 2014).

The For Christ Forever campaign sought to raise more than $100 million to purchase the property and support infrastructure improvements and long-term maintenance. The informational and fundraising effort, developed through the involvement of communication professionals and agencies working at times together and at times separately, and launched within a period of just a few weeks, offers an exceptional example of how a religious organization not known for speedy action (Why is the Catholic Church so slow to change?, 2014) swiftly seized an opportunity for growth.

As For Christ Forever unfolded, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange found itself faced with a variety of complex logistical issues with the news media, the general
public, Catholic faithful, and wealthy donors whose financial support was essential. Crystal Cathedral donors whose bequeathed icons would literally be uprooted in the property’s ownership transition harshly criticized the Diocese; this criticism, publicized through a series of unpleasant stories in the news media, created potential crisis incidents that the Diocese addressed as the rebranding campaign was beginning.

Although the many outcomes of *For Christ Forever* will take years to accomplish, early indications reflect noteworthy success. Catholic faithful and the public at large supported the property acquisition. In less than a year, donors came forward with more than $82 million in gifts, and strong ties were developed with media gatekeepers in California and worldwide.

This case study reviews the financial crisis and family conflict in Robert H. Schuller’s ministry that resulted in its bankruptcy and sale of the Crystal Cathedral. It presents a timeline of events in which the Catholic Diocese of Orange started out as one of several bidders for the property, ultimately was chosen as the purchaser, and was rhetorically anointed as such by Robert H. Schuller.

The article summarizes the *For Christ Forever* campaign to support the purchase property and fund refurbishment and long-term support, using information offered in interviews with the Diocese and involved public relations agency representatives. The article discusses how the Diocese responded when local media publicized allegations that memorial stones, cemetery plots and other bequeaths of Crystal Cathedral congregants had become “expendable” with the property transfer (Lovett, 2013, para. 2). It concludes by linking the actions of the Diocese with appropriate public relations and crisis management strategies. Finally, it offers five best practices suggestions for educators and professionals.
For more than 50 years, Robert H. Schuller was one of the world’s most recognized and admired Christian ministers (Frankl, 1990). He began preaching from the rooftop of a Southern California drive-in theater snack bar in 1955, using the slogan “come as you are, in the family car” (Poole, 2010, p. 19).

Schuller’s positive and appealing sermons were “packed with success stories, accented by alliterative slogans and an ‘I’m O.K., you’re O.K.’ philosophy” (Retailing optimism, 1975, p. 44). Before long, Schuller took to television and became nationally prominent through his Hour of Power TV program that claimed 10 million viewers a week at the height of its popularity (Miller, 2001).

In 1980, Schuller’s Garden Grove Community Church sought to construct a structure that would accommodate growing numbers of congregants. The result was the $18 million Crystal Cathedral, an all-glass sanctuary with 10,000 windows, 2,700 seats, and one of the world’s largest pipe organs. The Crystal Cathedral became so emblematic of Schuller’s ministry that the church changed its name to align with the new building.

Schuller continued building his legacy around the Crystal Cathedral. The grassy campus surrounding the Cathedral housed a school, visitor center, offices, statuary gardens, and a 236-foot bell tower made out of polished stainless steel.

Beginning in the early 2000s, a series of highly publicized family and financial conflicts, coupled with the national economic downturn, brought the once-thriving ministry to its knees (Swanson, 2012a). By 2011, the ministry was bankrupt, with debts of $43 million and counting. The Hour of Power was withdrawn from many television major markets. Key staff members were laid off and maintenance of the property was scaled back. In November 2011, the Crystal Cathedral and all the land around it were ordered sold by a U.S. Bankruptcy Court judge and by 2013 the ministry had vacated the
property. Table 1 shows the timeline of events from Robert H. Schuller’s first announced retirement in 2006 until the final Crystal Cathedral Ministry service in 2013.

By the time the Crystal Cathedral’s financial issues became public knowledge, officials with the Diocese of Orange were already engaged in a discussion about the need to accommodate growing numbers of Catholic worshipers. The Catholic population in Orange County, California, exceeds 1.2 million and is growing – particularly in the Vietnamese and Korean communities (Santa Cruz, 2011). No existing structure was sufficient in size to host large worship services. The Diocese had hired an architect and was planning to spend much more than $100 million to find land and begin construction of a new building.

The impending bankruptcy the Schuller ministry provided an unparalleled opportunity to acquire a world-renowned house of worship in much less time than new construction would require. “It was a tactical decision,” said Father Thomas Rausch, a professor of Catholic theology at Loyola Marymount University. “Here’s this beautiful church with a rich history in Orange County and an identity that’s already established. It’s a bargain for the local church” (Santa Cruz, 2011, para 16).

At the point where it became obvious that the Diocese should make a bid for the Crystal Cathedral, Diocese officials realized a financial plan would face many challenges. A primary issue would be that parishioners – many, recent immigrants, non-English speaking and low-income – would be asked to fund purchase of a prestige property while existing parish churches were badly in need of repair and support.

The Diocese had already identified exigent financial needs of local parishes that it had planned to address in a smaller countywide campaign. The needs included $16 million in refurbishments, upgrades, and curriculum enhancements for Catholic
schools, $16 million in infrastructure improvements for local parish churches and service centers, $6.1 million of additional investments in Diocesan Ministries, and $2 million to increase the endowment fund for retired priests.

The Diocese decided to roll all local parish needs into a single fundraising campaign. This would allow purchase of the Crystal Cathedral, its 34-acre campus and six additional buildings while allowing the Diocese to clean up pressing infrastructure and financial support issues that were problematic from the standpoint of future growth and public image.

Donors would be allowed to make pledges extending over a five-year period. Each parish would be assigned a predetermined fundraising target; at the point where the target was reached, all additional funds raised in that parish would return to the local church.

The fundraising effort was to be guided by the Cathedral Guild. Membership in the Guild was offered to Catholics who made a confirmed gift or pledge of at least $100,000 to support the campaign or who generated a single gift of at least $1 million from a foundation, corporation or nonprofit organization. The Guild was authorized to hire professional agencies to develop the campaign strategy, tactics, and tools. The Orange Catholic Foundation (OCF) would administer the campaign. OCF is an independent charitable 501(c) (3) corporation that raises funds and provides fundraising resources for the Diocese of Orange and its parishes, schools, and ministries. The Bishop’s Cabinet and a committee of priests would be the liaison between the Diocese and the campaign.
The *For Christ Forever* Campaign

When it became clear that the Diocese of Orange had a good chance of becoming the successful bidder for the Crystal Cathedral and surrounding property, Diocese officials issued a request for proposals to hire professional agencies to assist with fundraising, branding, and strategic communication. Six advertising/marketing agencies submitted proposals. A panel of communication experts organized by the OCF interviewed the firms and selected two of the bidders. One would focus on the fundraising strategies; the other would focus on strategic communication. A third firm that specializes in management of fundraising campaigns for religious groups was hired later to build relationships with donors.

Although the overriding strategic plan for the campaign was uniform, research and communicative actions were “on separate but parallel tracks,” according to one of the agency campaign planners employed in the effort. [Note: All interviews for this project were conducted in fall 2013. As shown here and elsewhere, quotations otherwise unattributed to a published source come from those interviews.]

Campaign tactical and tool development was dispersed among the agencies. For example, media buying, event planning, general copywriting, creation of collateral materials for priests and parish staff, and creation of documents related to the financial transaction were all tasks conducted separately but in unison by different working groups.

Early on, focus groups were conducted with parishioners and parish staff. The focus groups allowed campaign planners to, in the campaign planner’s words, “Figure out where the parishioner stands and how the communication stood as a whole, what people’s mindsets were, and what their thoughts were about the acquisition.”
Campaign planners toured the Crystal Cathedral campus and took many photographs to document the property’s amenities and problem areas. They immediately determined that the Schuler ministry financial crisis had resulted in extensive “deferred maintenance.”

“It was kind of depressing, because it was like going into an unkempt library that hadn’t been renovated and hadn’t been refurbished. It had that old mothball-like smell. It really showed the misallocation of money – where it didn’t go and where it went,” the planner said. This finding allowed the Diocese and its partner agencies to build refurbishment cost estimates into the campaign goal. Additionally, the Diocese was able to make a better strategic plan for occupying the property, so that some buildings could be used immediately while others underwent refurbishment.

One of the primary rebranding tasks for the Diocese was to rename the cathedral building. Bishop Todd Brown asked Catholics to submit proposed names that would be “Christological” and would link “this wonderful structure and its future to our faith and the larger community” (Cassidy, 2012, para. 3). After four months and 4,000 suggestions, the Diocese announced the selection of the Vatican-approved name Christ Cathedral (Kopetman, 2012, June 4). The campaign to support the cathedral was branded For Christ Forever, a name suggested somewhat inadvertently by Robert H. Schuller himself – who reportedly remarked during a conversation with Diocese leaders at April 2012 event that he had built the Cathedral “for Christ, forever.”

Once the agencies had been hired to do the work, the majority of the campaign structure came together over the span of only a few weeks. “We had to have everything out by September 2012,” an agency representative explained. “[This involved] the building of a complete branding, and collateral materials, interactive materials,
parishioner materials, pledge cards – it was a laundry list of what we had to do in that certain amount of time.”

The first public outreach involved more than 300 reception events held in the parishes and at other venues to introduce the campaign, explain its goals, solicit feedback from donors and congregants, and make personal appeals for financial support. As the parish meetings were beginning, the Christ Cathedral Guild soon had 75 members, each of whom had contributed at least $100,000. All this work was consistent with the kinds of relationship-based organizing cited in Sass (2000) that connects participants, their values, and activities in socially meaningful and supportive ways.

In addition to one-to-one and group meetings in the parishes, the For Christ Forever communication outreach included at least eleven different print and electronic media communication tools, as illustrated in Table 2. The Diocese also signed an agreement with Freedom Communications, owner of The Orange County Register, to expand the Diocese’s newspaper, OC Catholic, from a monthly to weekly publication. The 24-page newspaper with multilingual content became available to Register subscribers through free home delivery.

A professional we interviewed acknowledged campaign planners’ awareness of the need for “compliance gaining,” through the communication outreach. Compliance gaining is a concept referenced frequently in the scholarly literature on communication and persuasion. Compliance gaining emphasizes active rather than reactive communications. It focuses on the means used by people and organizations to influence others, including the multiple strategies employed to gain compliance (Lee, Levine, & Cambra, 1997).
A review of the major *For Christ Forever* campaign materials (see Table 2) affirms that the effort employed at least eight of the 16 compliance-gaining strategies identified by Marwell and Schmitt (1967):

1. **Promise** – If you comply, you will be rewarded according to a promise made.
2. **Expertise / positive** – If you comply, you will be rewarded because of the nature of things.
3. **Debt** – You owe compliance because of past favors.
4. **Moral appeal** – You are moral if you comply.
5. **Self-feeling / positive** – You will feel better if you comply.
6. **Altercasting / positive** – A person with good qualities would comply.
7. **Altruism** – Your compliance is much needed and would constitute a personal favor.
8. **Esteem / positive** – People will think better of you if you comply.

By gaining compliance among its followers, a religious organization creates a spiritual and social identity for itself in the world (Appelrouth, 1999). This identity rests on “a commitment to religious beliefs and practices and a feeling of kinship with a social group united by a common religious tie” (Caplovitz, 1977, p. 181).

Compliance gaining also came into play with a key member of the Guild. As already noted, the Guild was comprised of wealthy benefactors who had each pledged to “kick start” the campaign. A Diocese official described Guild members as “the cornerstone” of the fundraising effort.

According to an agency representative we interviewed, the most influential member of the Guild was a wealthy donor, referred to as Mrs. C for the purposes of this discussion. Mrs. C would provide a substantial sum of money for the project and had
solicited a small group of benefactors who would also contribute large amounts. Mrs. C’s approval of the campaign concept and materials was essential. According to the agency representative, Mrs. C was initially resistant to many of the proposed campaign ideas. “We had to get her on the phone and ask her to come into the agency. I did the presentation in front of her and at first she was very stone cold. After the presentation she finally fell in love with the logo,” the representative explained.

In the end, the support of Mrs. C and her group was essential. “She approached the bishops and pastors, she had to support this project. She had to stand behind it in front of the parishioners and other investors,” the representative added, with emphasis on the word investors. The implication here was that campaign planners and Guild leadership had the mindset of investing in the Diocese’s future versus simply gathering donations to fix problems with properties and programs.

The media materials created to support the *For Christ Forever* campaign allowed followers to invest logically, emotionally and financially in the organization. This is important, because followers look to the religious organization’s communication to help frame personal spiritual beliefs in accordance with the denomination’s theology (Neck & Millman, 1994). Media materials disseminated to followers allow people to align their values with the organization’s; in so doing, media materials facilitate “emotional investment” in the church and its structure and beliefs (Dehler & Welsh, 1994, p. 22).

The Diocese estimated there were around 1.2 million Catholics in Orange County, or 38% of the total population. Therefore, framing of media materials was especially critical for the Diocese, given the county’s diverse demographics. Orange County has historically been recognized as a community of wealthy white protestant Republicans. Within the past 25 years, the population has expanded to include significant numbers of
Hispanics, as well as Korean and Vietnamese immigrants (Reft, 2013). In 2009, almost half the county’s residents spoke a language other than English at home (Nagourney, 2010).

Multi-lingual, culturally sensitive media materials were essential to the campaign. This was particularly important for the Hispanic population whose strong support would be needed for the campaign to succeed. Pew Research Center data show 91% of U.S. Hispanics are affiliated with a church. Of those who are affiliated, 68% attend a Roman Catholic Church and half describe themselves as regular churchgoers (Pew Research Center, 2007). Among Hispanics, “the church is one of the principal centers of religious and social activity” (Jeong, 2014, p. 22). Jeong and other researchers have confirmed that Hispanics who regularly attend church are more likely to identify with the congregation and recognize their ethnic belonging within it. It was essential for media materials to have appropriate structure, text, and illustration to harmonize with Hispanic community members’ values.

Unexpected Challenges

The Diocese did not make it clear through the RFP that multiple agencies would be employed in the effort. This initial and critical omission rendered communication between agencies challenging. Our interviews revealed examples of misunderstandings and interpersonal conflict one would expect when multiple teams of people are all working on different elements of the same campaign. The issues were exacerbated because, at first, the different agency representatives were not aware of the extent of the involvement of others.

There were also reports of high stress, general disagreement, and not enough objectivity in the process by team members who were Catholics. “Never in my 14 years
as a professional have I had someone on my team disagree with me in front of the client,” one agency professional said, reflecting on a conflict that developed within and between agencies involved. It was alleged some staffers were more emotionally invested “because they were Catholics [and] had their dreams in this.”

Representatives of the Diocese, on the other hand, were focused clearly on what needed to be accomplished. “We were in the initial kick-off meeting, and it was about all of the materials we were going to get [to the Diocese],” an agency representative explained. “One part we were going to give to each and every parish was the brochures, the postcards, and the videos. I raised my hand and asked, ‘When we hand these over to the parishes, what are you going to do to make sure that this is being enforced – that these priests are actually going to do this?’ This [Diocese staff member] looked at me directly in the eye and said – and this is how I know she got it – ‘Whatever each franchise decides to do with the materials is their choice.’ That is verbatim what she said, ‘franchise.’ And I sat there, like, okay, she got it.” This comment, like the Diocese official’s use of the term investors previously noted, signifies organizational agreement to a long-term commitment. For the Diocese, For Christ Forever was more than just a fundraising effort. It was, and is, an investment in the future of Catholicism in Orange County.

By the fall of 2013, $82 million in pledges and gifts had been committed. A Diocese official predicted the campaign would “go well beyond $100 million” by the end of 2014. Additional extensive “building naming opportunities” on the Christ Cathedral campus could generate $15-20 million each. “It’s not just a Catholic campaign,” he said. “What we are doing represents a community of communities.”
The research effort did not attempt to document the administrative cost of the campaign, because it was felt that inquiry in this area might risk the cooperation of Diocese and agency representatives who agreed to participate in interviews. Researchers were told by one interviewee that at least one of the agencies underbid, exceeded its budget, and lost money. At that agency, all staff members who had worked on *For Christ Forever* left the agency when the agency’s involvement in the campaign ended.

**Crisis Communication**

Between 2011 and 2013, several incidents threatened to develop into organizational crisis and inhibit the launch and development of the *For Christ Forever* campaign. These stories and others (see Table 3) received extensive media coverage.

Each incident constituted an organizational crisis, which by definition is “a low-probability, high-impact situation that is perceived by critical stakeholders to threaten the viability of the organization and that is subjectively experienced by these individuals as personally and socially threatening” (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 66).

First, less than a month after the bankruptcy court judge approved the sale of the property to the Diocese, the Diocese determined that addressing the maintenance that had been deferred by the Schuller ministry would require millions of dollars in additional rehabilitation investments (Arellano, 2011). Extensive rancorous discussion followed on social media outlets for more than a year.

Second, in 2012, a Crystal Cathedral congregant filed a claim in bankruptcy court, seeking $5.6 million from Robert H. Schuller and $30 billion from the Diocese of Orange. The plaintiff alleged the sale of the church campus violated his religious and civil rights (Kumar, 2012). The suit was later dismissed.
Third, in 2013, a *New York Times* story reported the Diocese was “ripping out” memorial stones that it found “expendable” in its effort to convert the Crystal Cathedral into a place of Catholic worship (Lovett, 2013, para. 1-2). The article quoted several congregants, and termed the removal “yet another indignity” (para. 4) delivered by the Catholic Church to Crystal Cathedral congregants. The Diocese was not able to save damaged, crumbling stones so it arranged for digital images of the stones to be created. These images were incorporated into a public display to be housed on the Christ Cathedral grounds.

Throughout the initial months of the campaign, an agency representative noted continuing resistance from parishioners who were happy frequenting their local parish, lived some distance from the Cathedral, and saw little or no value in the project. Some of this resistance was evidenced in social media communication. Negative comments were posted to a public forum on the Diocese’s own website. According to an agency representative, Diocese executives were unaware of these postings until campaign planners pointed them out. “So then we had to go in [on behalf of the Diocese] and filter through all that and pull out the negative,” the representative said.

Overall, however, an analysis of more than 100 news stories published or broadcast between 2011 and 2014 reflects overwhelmingly positive communications by Diocese representatives. The Diocese successfully demonstrated initiative with media gatekeepers and was transparent about its actions and future plans. The actions of the Diocese differed radically from those of Rev. Schuller’s ministry, which throughout its final years, demonstrated poor crisis communication and allowed “a proliferation of news stories portraying the ministry as out of touch, and Schuller family members as quarreling spendthrifts” (Swanson 2012b, Abstract).
Conclusion and Best Practices

_Spectacular achievement is always preceded by spectacular preparation._

Robert H. Schuller

Religious organizations must ‘talk the talk’ and ‘walk the walk’ if they are to take advantage of opportunities, engage the faithful, and raise the enormous sums of money needed to finance an infrastructure for congregational fellowship, growth, and stability in 21st Century America. This case study presents noteworthy examples of how this was accomplished by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange. The Diocese took advantage of an unparalleled opportunity to acquire land, buildings, and a signature cathedral that will serve Catholics in Southern California for decades to come. Christ Cathedral could indeed become “the most significant Catholic cultural center in the world outside of the Vatican” (Kopetman, 2012, August 8, para. 8). The rebranding campaign's success was largely the result of effective, sustained communication with a variety of publics.

Both the successes and challenges of the _For Christ Forever_ campaign present opportunities for developing best practices for the public relations profession. Five emerged in our analysis:

1. Always plan for growth, and be ready for unexpected opportunities

This case study documents that in 2011, Diocese leadership had already been engaged in strategic thinking about the need for a new cathedral, had staff and outside support working toward that end, and had a collegial relationship with Robert H. Schuller. When Schuller’s ministry went into bankruptcy, the Diocese was prepared to act and had initial financial resources to do so. Its preparedness allowed the Diocese to acquire the Crystal Cathedral, its land and its support buildings for about ten percent of
the properties’ actual value – thus avoiding a search for land and subsequent
construction that would have taken years.

2. Clarify all campaign participants’ roles and responsibilities

It is appropriate to seek outside agency support for a large communications
campaign, as the Diocese did with For Christ Forever. At the same time, planning a
communications campaign can become strategically awkward if there are multiple
agencies and/or individuals to coordinate. A campaign should never move forward
without clear understanding of all parties working and their roles and obligations.

3. Build and maintain strong ties with all media gatekeepers

The media landscape is vast and growing. An organization in change must
prepare for publics to react in emotional and possibly unreasonable ways.
Disseminating objective explanatory information through the media helps lessen any
possible emotional reaction of publics (Jin & Yeon, 2010) and shows the organization
seeks harmonious relationships (Smith, 2009). Throughout the acquisition of the
Crystal Cathedral and development of the For Christ Forever campaign, the Diocese of
Orange worked professionally with media gatekeepers. Leadership presented consistent
messages through free and purchased media, and never tried to stifle its opponents – as
the Schuller ministry leadership did when it orchestrated the shutdown of a blog
maintained by a former parishioner who questioned ministry actions (Bharath, 2011).
4. Never burn your bridges

As a vice president of the Public Relations Society of America recently wrote, “Burning a bridge may feel good at the time and it might not haunt straight away, but it will come back to haunt you” (Cegielski, 2014, para. 5). The Diocese followed appropriate professional practice by maintaining communication and involvement with the former Crystal Cathedral’s leadership and congregants. Robert H. Schuller’s wife Arvella passed away in February 2014; Rev. Schuller passed away in 2015. Memorial services for both the Schullers were held on the former Crystal Cathedral property. The former Crystal Cathedral congregation is now called Shepherd’s Grove Ministries. Bobby Schuller, grandson of Robert H. Schuller, is Pastor and host of The Hour of Power television series. Father Christopher Smith, Episcopal Vicar to Christ Cathedral, has had several public interactions with the younger Schuller and delivered a sermon on Hour of Power in late 2013 (Schuller, 2014). These examples demonstrate the Diocese’s desire not to burn any bridges with the Schuller family or its current and former congregants.

5. Be willing to examine and learn from your work

Effective leaders never stop learning. A big part of that learning process is “taking the time to reflect on past events to discern the lessons they offer” (Seijts, 2013, para. 4). Diocese leadership demonstrated its commitment to learning by providing documentation about the development and execution of the For Christ Forever campaign for this case study and by participating in interviews about the effort. No attempt was made to restrict access to information or limit the scope of the research. No request was made for review of the manuscript prior to publication. This open, friendly relationship was contrary to what researchers often find when trying to gather information from religious organizations.
Summary and Acknowledgements

Our society is experiencing great social, economic, and technological transition. Many of the organizations that ‘stood the test of time’ are being threatened. The researchers hope this article will provide valuable insights on a significant transition within Christianity in America – as well as provide guidance for leaders of other religious and nonprofit groups in these changing times.

We are thankful to representatives of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange for extraordinary cooperation during the development of this research. We were treated with great courtesy. All our questions were answered. Extensive documentation was made available to us. We also thank the agency representatives who spoke candidly about a challenging campaign. We granted anonymity to our interviewees so as to not create any difficulties with their employers or clients.
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Retailing optimism (1975, February 24). *Time*, p. 44.


### Table 1

**Timeline of Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 22, 2006</td>
<td>Robert H. Schuller announces his retirement; consistory of Crystal Cathedral elects Robert A. Schuller as Senior Pastor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 25, 2008</td>
<td>Robert H. Schuller announces that Robert A. Schuller has been removed from the <em>Hour of Power</em> television program for “lack of shared vision.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 29, 2008</td>
<td>Robert A. Schuller resigns as Senior Pastor of the Crystal Cathedral congregation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>Robert H. Schuller announces that Sheila Schuller Coleman will handle “administrative duties” of the ministry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 11, 2010</td>
<td>Robert H. Schuller announces his retirement; Sheila Schuller Coleman will become Senior Pastor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 18, 2010</td>
<td>Crystal Cathedral files Chapter 11 bankruptcy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 24, 2010</td>
<td>Speaking publicly for the first time since the bankruptcy filing, Robert H. Schuller tearfully asks parishioners to help the ministry with $43 million in indebtedness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 24, 2010</td>
<td>Bankruptcy court agrees to allow the church to spend cash collateral that it had set aside to secure bank loans while the Cathedral is in bankruptcy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 16, 2011</td>
<td>Crystal Cathedral Ministries asks choir members to sign a covenant declaring the Bible as “authoritative and infallible,” and marriage to be “between one man and one woman.” Robert H. Schuller says he is “tolerant of all people” but agrees with the covenant’s position on homosexuality.</td>
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May 25, 2011 | Ministry announces it will sell properties to a real estate group for $46 million, to raise enough funds to cover debts and emerge from bankruptcy.

July 4, 2011 | Robert H. Schuller removed from his voting position on the board of directors and given the title Chairman of the Board Emeritus.

July 16, 2011 | Longtime Crystal Cathedral congregants, claiming new leadership is unresponsive, announce an effort to “rise up and take our church back” and demand a “truly independent board” to govern the ministry.

July 22, 2011 | Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange offers $50 million for Cathedral properties.

July 28, 2011 | Crystal Cathedral Ministry board is “reorganized” and Robert H. Schuller is reinstated as a voting member.

July 31, 2011 | Ministry board makes the announcement that “the cathedral is not for sale at any price.” Congregants are called to open their checkbooks and help wipe out an estimated $50 million in debts.

August 10, 2011 | Debtor’s committee of unsecured creditors announces it is analyzing Crystal Cathedral books to see if fraudulent financial transfers were made to “insiders” including Schuller family.

September 30, 2011 | Creditors claim Schuller family has been taking money from the church endowment; Schuller family denies the allegation.

August 20, 2011 | Website hosted by dissenting Crystal Cathedral members is shut down, after Crystal Cathedral leadership alleges, “unauthorized use of its copyrighted name.”

October 18, 2011 | Ministry reports to the bankruptcy court that its “miracle faith”
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 26, 2011</td>
<td>Crystal Cathedral Ministries endorses sale of property to Chapman University for $50 million.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 14, 2011</td>
<td>Chapman University and Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange both increase their bids for the Crystal Cathedral properties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 17, 2011</td>
<td>Crystal Cathedral Ministries endorses sale of property to Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange for $57 million, saying, “there is still plenty of time for God to do his miracle” and save the ministry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 17, 2011</td>
<td>Bankruptcy court judge reviews offers and orders sale of church and property to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 13, 2011</td>
<td>Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange announces it will need to raise at least $100 million to pay for purchase of Crystal Cathedral and additional costs for renovation and maintenance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 18, 2011</td>
<td>Robert H. Schuller declares, “I trust the Catholic Church” to be the new owner of the Crystal Cathedral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 12, 2012</td>
<td>Sheila Schuller Coleman announces she is leaving the Crystal Cathedral to form her own church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 2013</td>
<td>Crystal Cathedral Ministries holds its final service in the Crystal Cathedral.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

http://www.forchristforever.org/

Campaign Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus: Cathedral Campaign and Cathedral Update</th>
<th>Orange County Register</th>
<th>(8 pages, full color, illustrated newsprint – later reproduced on glossy heavy bond paper)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Sacred Spot</td>
<td>special section (6/28/2013) with celebratory feature stories about the Diocese’s plans for the Cathedral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Special Invitation: Christ Cathedral Guild</td>
<td>Identifies Guild benefits, invites donors of $100,000 or more to join</td>
<td>(4 pages, full color, illustrated, glossy, heavy bond paper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Campaign Welcoming Video</td>
<td>Overview of the campaign and its goals – DVD production paid for through a donor’s gift</td>
<td>(DVD, 7:28 run time, in English, Spanish, Vietnamese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Christ Cathedral</td>
<td>Illustrated map of Cathedral, other buildings and grounds</td>
<td>(Large, 6 panels, multilingual, illustrated, glossy, full color)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus: Catholic Education</td>
<td>Explains the “top priority”</td>
<td>(Large, 4 panels, illustrated, glossy, full color)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus: Christ Cathedral &amp; Cathedral Campus</strong></td>
<td>Itemized list of Cathedral, other buildings and grounds, planned renovations for each, and planned expenditures</td>
<td>(Large, 4 panels, illustrated, glossy, full color)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus: Endowment for Retired Priests</strong></td>
<td>Explains roles and responsibilities of priests, presents elements of endowment plan to support priests in retirement</td>
<td>(Medium size, 10 panels, illustrated, glossy, full color)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History in the Making</strong></td>
<td>Overview brochure, identifies campaign priorities and how to give</td>
<td>(Medium size, 6 panels, multilingual, illustrated, glossy, full color)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orange Catholic Foundation – Capital Campaign Donation Card</strong></td>
<td>Allows congregants to pledge up to $50,000 and pay via bank draft, check, or credit card</td>
<td>(Small, card stock, two-color)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Our Faith, Church, and Future</strong></td>
<td>Fundraising appeal using brief interviews with congregants</td>
<td>(DVD, 8:28 run time, in English, Spanish, Vietnamese)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

Media Accounts of Dissent During For Christ Forever Campaign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2012</td>
<td>The Christian Post (Kumar, 2012)</td>
<td>A congregant of the Crystal Cathedral filed a claim in bankruptcy court, seeking $5.6 million from the California mega church founder Robert H. Schuller and $30 billion from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange, alleging the sale of the church campus violated his religious and civil rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2012</td>
<td>Catholica blog forum (Quotes from multiple postings)</td>
<td>The hierarchs want another albatross &quot;monument&quot; to &quot;glorify&quot; themselves... Does God really needs another &quot;Catholic temple&quot; to send up more holy smoke of burnt offerings, while millions of human beings go uncared for in the world?... I suspect that the Church has just bought itself one HUGE liability... Think what $50mil could have done for charities that deal with the extremes of human suffering?... I think it is just a disgrace we do not need a Cathedral like this...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2013</td>
<td>Fish Eaters Blog forum (Quotes from multiple postings)</td>
<td>Why don't we just spend 1/5 of the total amount and build a Cathedral which actually looks like a Catholic Church... Since Vatican II we’ve been saturated with cheap structures consisting of drywall, carpeting and brick that cost very little but ended up being bland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2013</td>
<td>The Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange, which</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>The New York Times (Lovett, 2013)</td>
<td>bought the enormous glass and steel church last year, has begun ripping out the memorial stones as it begins major renovations to modernize the campus and convert the nondenominational mega church to a Catholic place of worship... the stones, many of them memorials to dead loved ones, have become expendable. Sources quoted describing the Diocese action as “disgraceful,” “betrayal,” “crummy,” “an insult.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2013 The Christian Post (Weber, 2013)</td>
<td>Filmmaker and Christian media consultant Phil Cooke recently offered a word of advice to those upset that their donor bricks at the former Crystal Cathedral in Orange County, Calif. are being replaced with new landscaping. Cooke advised the upset donors to &quot;get a life,&quot; and to focus on the act of giving more than the reward of recognition that accompanies it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>