

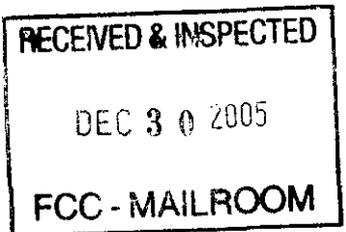


COB CC-0134

COPY Office of Communications

December 28, 2005

Federal Communications Commission
Attn: Secretary's Office
Closed Captioning
445 12th Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554



RE: REQUEST FOR EXEMPTION FROM F.C.C. CLOSED CAPTIONING REQUIREMENTS

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids Michigan respectfully submits this request for exemption from the Federal Communications Commissions Closed Captioning requirements. We feel that the Diocese's live local broadcast of the Sunday Mass fits the exemptions provided under 47 CFR section 79.1 of the Commissions rules, sub sections (d) and (f).

Part 79.1 Section d.

1. The Diocese of Grand Rapids airs a weekly live broadcast of Sunday morning Mass at 10am on one local station, WXMI FOX 17.
2. The broadcast airs for 1 hr, and has no commercial content.
3. The content of the program is unscripted and specifically limited to a Catholic Mass, beginning to end.
4. The broadcast of the Mass originates from the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Grand Rapids, Michigan and is broadcast only to the Grand Rapids, Michigan market.
5. As this program is broadcast live and not taped for distribution, it has no repeat value.

The Diocese understands that this exemption was, *"intended to apply only to a limited class of truly local materials, including, for example, local parades, local high school and other non-professional sports, live unscripted local talk shows and community theatre productions"*. As our broadcast meets these same local definitions, the Diocese sees no rationale nor distinction why our program would be categorized any differently than a local parade, or sporting event that has natural sponsorship opportunities, either appropriate or available to broadcasts of a religious nature.

Part 79.1 Section f.

1. Funding for the purchase of the air time for this program is provided through a specific annual appeal to diocesan parishioners. The intent is to provide evangelization through outreach, as well as provide a local Catholic Mass for those parishioners who are no longer able to attend in person.
2. Currently, the cost associated with the broadcast of this program is \$2,700 per week, \$140,400 annually. In an attempt to minimize increases, the Diocese has signed a multi year contract limiting the annual cost increase to \$100 per week per year. (ex: \$2,700 per week 2006, \$2,800 per week 2007, \$2,900 per week 2008)
3. Additional labor associated with the broadcast is provided by volunteers/parishioners donating their time and expertise.
4. The budgeted amount for year 2006 is \$140,400. Closed captioning would create a budgeted loss of \$4940.
5. As the programming costs are planned to rise \$5,200 per year, the additional expense associated Closed Captioning (\$400 per month, \$4,800 per year) would nearly double the negative variance from budgeted levels and make the continuation of the program difficult.
6. Attempts to solicit for additional funding are not available until the expiration of the original appeal in 2006. Additional funding options such as sponsorship and/or commercialization are not acceptable with this form of program.
7. The Diocese has investigated options of moving the program to a different station and negotiating a lower program rate to help cover the costs associated with Closed Captioning. We have as yet been unable to secure a similar day part (Sundays @ 10am) due to both network availability and costs demands.
8. The Diocese is extremely wary of a change in the program day/time/station placement due to the confusing nature of channel assignments with local cable providers and the effect that would have on our primarily elderly well established viewing audience. Many of our viewers would have a difficult time finding the program on a new station. A new time is unavailable unless we incur the enormous cost of taping, editing and distributing the program in advance.
9. The Diocese is equally concerned that a 4 – 7 second delay caused by closed captioning will significantly impede the important flow of the Mass.
10. The Diocese is also worried about the great potential for error that could occur during translation because many aspects of the Mass would not translate verbatim.

The Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids appreciates and understands the factors that contributed to the Commission's requirement of Closed Captioning for all programs. The Diocese's commitment to providing the televised Mass is consistent with its faithfulness to address the spiritual needs of the homebound and older adults. Steps are taken at the parish level to provide assistance for the physically impaired and the hearing impaired who attend services in person.

The Diocese understands that any exemption granted by the F.C.C. is intended to be a temporary exemption. The Diocese will continue to pursue options for suitable air time at a rate that includes Captioning service, does not exceed our current budget capacity, and addresses our translation and delay concerns.

The Diocese appreciates the consideration of the Commission with respect to this matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Haarman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Mary Haarman
Director of Communications
Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids
660 Burton Street, S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49507
(616) 243-0491