

# **Homily Helps**



**2017 Catholic Charity Appeal**

**Diocese of Providence**

*Celebrating our 92<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary*

**1925 – 2017**

## **Anonymous**

Two images: one from today's Gospel; the other, from a bombed church in Europe.

The first is the Good Shepherd. They say that a Shepherd's hands are so sensitive that he knows the identity of each of the sheep simply by touching them. This is the tender love that God has for all of us ...a love that cares for, rescues and protects those in his care.

The second image comes from a church in Europe that was bombed during World War II. The only thing that was left standing was the large crucifix before which many would stop and pray. But even that had been damaged. For the two arms on the image of Christ's body were missing....never to be found. When the church was rebuilt a decision was made not to have new arms placed on the statue. Instead, they placed a plaque at the base of the cross which read: "You are my arms in the world today."

I come before you today to ask once again that you become the arms of the Good Shepherd in the world today. I come to ask you to once again generously support the work of the Catholic Charity Drive.

As in the past I ask you to consider a gift of just a little more than \$3.00 a week or \$12.50 a month. And if you would be willing to give \$12.50 a month, you would be pledging \$150.00 a year. \$3.00 a week doesn't buy a lot...but if each household in the parish were willing to pledge that much, the total would begin to make a difference....make a difference for the

35,000 people who go hungry in our state every night...make a difference for the 197,000 elderly in our state who often times find themselves in need of advocates and assistance....make a difference in the countless children and adults who suffer from physical and mental challenges...make a difference in the homeless who must leave shelters at 6:00 AM in the morning in order to find food and life in the despair of the streets.....all of these are touched by the Catholic Charity Drive. Explain the cards...

I don't know that any musical experience has enjoyed more success than the internationally acclaimed "Les Miserables". This study of the journey of Jean Val Jean from hardened criminal to just mayor to saintly father and guardian of the beautiful Cosette, the play is a profound study in the capacity of human being to rise to simple greatness.

I have always thought that the most profound and moving part of the show comes in the first 10 minutes. It is that scene where the newly released prisoner Jean Val Jean finds rest in the home of the saintly Bishop of Digne. Val Jean sneaks out during the night, stealing the possessions of the good Bishop and is caught and arrested by the police. When the police bring Jean to the Bishop's residence, the bishop stuns not only the police but Jean Val Jean himself when he looks at him and says: "My son, in your haste you forgot to take the candlesticks which I also gave to you." The police decide they were mistaken and Jean Val Jean is so touched by the generosity of the saintly bishop that his heart is forever changed. He is set upon the path that leads him on the journey that is "Les Miserables".

Generosity is very much like the action of the good bishop. It is throwing a pebble into a large pond. The ripples become increasingly larger and the impact of the stone becomes unimaginably great. So also with generosity. When a human being is touched by the generosity of others he or she is set upon a journey which causes that generosity to multiply far beyond expectation.

I stand before you today to once again ask for your generosity. I ask for your generosity for a high school student who cannot afford a proper education. I ask for your generosity for an unwed mother who desperately needs help. I ask your generosity for a single parent who struggles to make ends meet. I ask your generosity for the orphan who has no home, the elderly woman with Alzheimer's, and the immigrant who is a stranger in a strange land. I ask your generosity for Christ who is present in all of these and whose number is countless.

As in the past I ask you to consider a simple formula for your gift – your pledge. Would you be generous enough to buy a child's meal at McDonalds for one of these needy brothers and sisters of Christ? And if you would be generous enough to do that – would you be willing to do that each week. And if you did that, if you were willing to spend \$10 a month, would you be willing to do that each month and pledge a gift of \$120.00 a year. It isn't a lot of money. But it is a pebble that explodes into a ripple of generosity that is never ending.

And now I would like us to take a few moments so that we can extend our generosity to those in need. In your pews...

## **Anonymous**

### **I. ONE TIME A NEWS REPORTER ASKED MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA a probing question ...**

- ◆ “Mother Teresa, what is the worst disease facing the world today?”
- ◆ those around her thought Mother Teresa would say “AIDS” or “CANCER” but she thought for a moment and said: “DESPAIR.”
- ◆ she explained: *“Despair is the worst disease facing the world because it robs a person of something critical to life: HOPE. The human person cannot live without hope!”*

### **II. BUT HOPE IS EASILY LOST, ISN'T IT?**

- ◆ hope can be very FRAGILE ... especially for the poor, the broken, the sick, elderly, those facing difficult circumstances ...
- ◆ HOPE ... it's something we can give to countless people across our State when we support the annual CATHOLIC CHARITY FUND APPEAL with our pledges and our gifts ...
- ◆ IT IS GOD'S WORK but our hands that God uses to reach out and embrace those who need COMPASSION and MERCY and CARING and KINDNESS ...

### **III. LAST WEEKEND, THE CHAIRPERSON of our parish appeal prepared us VERY WELL for this weekend ...**

- ◆ it is now MY RESPONSIBILITY to ask for your PLEDGE or your GIFT today ...

IN YOUR PEW, please find the envelopes and the pens or pencils that are needed at this time...

Please allow me to review the ENVELOPE with you ...

1. please note that PART A must be completed with your personal information
2. PART B is for those who wish to make A PLEDGE ...
  - a. PLEDGES may be made payable BY monthly or quarterly payments and you will receive PAYMENT STATEMENTS from the Charity Drive office directly
  - b. you may wish to make a DOWN PAYMENT on a pledge today or NOT ... please make checks payable to: CCA
3. PART C is for a one-time gift ... if you are writing a check, please make it payable to: CCA
4. **please note THAT the envelope has a FLAP** that contains information for DIRECT DEBIT or CREDIT CARD payments ...please read that information carefully FOR THOSE OPTIONS ...

We really hope that you will take the next few moments of QUIET to fill out the envelope and make your PLEDGE or GIVE YOUR GIFT ... I will PAUSE NOW for you to do so ...

PAUSE

Please put your envelope in the collection basket in a few moments ...

If you are choosing to take home an envelope, THANK YOU for bringing it back to Church next weekend ... you may put it into the collection basket at any Mass ...

Allow me to thank you on behalf of all those who may receive HOPE because of your generosity and caring ...

Thank you and God bless you!

## **Anonymous**

Jesus said, “When I was hungry, you gave me food.”

**Catholic Charities gives grants for food and shelter like Emmanuel House, Keep The Heat On and other ministries.**

Jesus said. “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

**Catholic Charities gives grants for family assistance and other ministries.**

Jesus said, “When I was ill, you comforted me.”

**Catholic Charities gives grants for Saint Antoine Residence, Saint Clare Home, Office of Health Care Ministries and others.**

Jesus said, “When I was in prison, you visited me.”

**Catholic Charities funds prison ministry and trains people to visit the inmates, offer spiritual assistance, provide liturgical services and teach them the faith.**

All these ministries – plus grants for education, youth, Catholic Sports League, Marriage Preparation and others are all made possible through your donations.

**Give and Gifts Will Be Given Unto You.**

## Anonymous

When I was studying for the priesthood many years ago, I spent a summer in a parish with an older pastor. He was a successful pastor who was beloved by the parishioners. He was also very wise and plain spoken. One day when he was looking back on his life. He said: *“There are only two kinds of people in the world, those who are there when we need them, and those who aren’t.”*

To put what he said in a religious context just look at Abraham because he was the first kind. Whenever God needed him, he was there. When God called, he answered. *“Here I am,”* he said. When God asked him to leave his homeland and family in his old age, and go into the wilderness, to a strange land, he went. And when He asked him to sacrifice the person he loved most in the world, his beloved son, Abraham was even willing to do that.

His life is an astonishing chronicle of great faith. No matter what, he was ready to serve God – some translations even have him answering God’s call with just that one word, *“Ready.”* Abraham was ready, willing and able to place himself in the hands in service to the Almighty. Do any of us have that much faith and love? How many of us are able to say *“Here I am”* to God, no matter the time or the place, what he calls upon us?

This week we are presented a unique opportunity to answer God’s call in the Catholic Charity Appeal. Both individually and as a parish we can help transfigure the lives of those most in need. We can generously respond: *“Here I am!”*



How? For the mere cost of one large Pizza (with four toppings!!) (\$150 for pledged over 12 months/\$12 per month pledge) We can say “*Here I am*”

-to an elderly couple who go to Project Hope in Central Falls seeking help to pay for their costly prescriptions so they can still pay their electric bill.

-to a single mother who cannot afford to put the heat on and also buy food for her children.

-a refugee family fleeing worn torn Liberia or leaving devastated Haiti with only the clothes on their back and need the Church to help them find a safe place and warm welcome

-to a prisoner in the ACI who needs to hear God’s Word and experience God’s mercy from our Prison Chaplains

-to the man dying of Alzheimer’s who needs the dignity and love and compassion and care found at St. Antoine’s Home

-to the recovering street addict who has found a warm shelter and sturdy support at the Emmanuel Homeless Shelter

Each year the Catholic Charity Appeal calls to look beyond our living room, to see beyond our parish boundaries and reach out in faith and with love to a stranger in need. The many agencies of our Church daily provide assistance, support and help, but also daily make present the Lord himself with their compassion and care, their faith and love. The Lord calls us today to help once again. He calls us not to simply give from our surplus but to truly sacrifice in love and faith for our brothers and sisters in need.

Supporting the Catholic Charity Appeal is really responding to God's call with the faith, as Abraham did before us. It is saying "*Here I am*" to God: the God of the poor and the needy, the God of the sick and the suffering, the God of the prisoner and the immigrant.

In his annual message to the Church on Lent, Pope Benedict said on Ash Wednesday: "*Our hearts should never be so wrapped up in our affairs and problems that we fail to hear the cry of the poor. Humbleness of heart and the personal experience of suffering can awaken within us a sense of compassion and charity.*"

It seems like the Pope like the old priest knows that indeed there are two kinds of people in the world: those who are there when they are needed, and those who aren't. God is calling us. God needs us. The Catholic Charity Appeal needs us. This weekend is dedicated to supporting the work of God in service to our brothers and sisters in need. We do this through the Catholic Charity Appeal. I hope and pray each and every one of you is able to support this vital important work of our Church. I urge you to answer God's call to help with "*Here I am*" as you make a generous pledge to the Catholic Charity Appeal.

## **Anonymous**

I. This year's Diocesan Catholic Charity Appeal takes place here at Saint \_\_\_\_\_ Parish from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. You have all received information about the Appeal from the diocese and a letter this past week from St. \_\_\_\_\_. You will be contacted over the next few weeks at your home by one of our volunteers or if we did not have a volunteer for your street, you received your card and a return envelope in the mail.

A. Upon reflection, most of us can truthfully say that we have been blessed by God with many wonderful gifts. Our families, our homes, our work and the many freedoms we enjoy in our nation are all evidence of this. And while most of us are certainly not wealthy, we have, in some small measure, beyond the home and family bills, been graced with many blessings. The problem is that some among us, maybe even here in our own parish, have to struggle more to experience these blessings and need the help of others to do so.

B. Each day in our Diocese people in need turn to the Church for help and support. Some are hungry, some are homeless, some are sick and some are imprisoned by pain, anger or fear. The social ministry programs of our diocese serve tens of thousands of people including the elderly who may need special assistance in their daily lives. In addition, those people in dire need of temporary assistance with their rent, medical or utilities or living expenses turn to our Charity Appeal agencies and receive help and assistance.

C. Your continuing support provides financial assistance and support to 35 diocesan elementary schools and 9 high schools as well as Bishop McVinney Regional School in the inner city of Providence. As a result of your continuing support, more than 35,000 people of all age groups are able to participate in a number of religious education and ministry programs. All 39 agencies of the Appeal bring comfort and assistance in some way to people suffering from AIDS, the sick, the elderly, the physically and mentally challenged and the hungry and the homeless.

II. In today's Gospel Jesus takes on the moneychangers and vendors in the temple area by forcefully driving them all out. Why? Because they were there not to assist the people in making their offering at the temple but to cheat them. They did what they were doing out of greed and selfishness. Each year through the Catholic Charity Appeal we try to do just the opposite. Our motives are those that foster healing and comfort to the people in our diocese and state who need our help. We want to let them know that our belief in God brings us to help those in need of healing by supporting the agencies of the Catholic Charity Appeal.

A. The diocesan goal for this year is \_\_\_\_\_. Our Goal here at St. \_\_\_\_\_ this year is \$\_\_\_\_\_. Last year our total collected was \$\_\_\_\_\_, there were \_\_\_\_ gifts and the average gift was \$\_\_\_\_\_. Please consider pledging your support. If you pledge, you can increase your gift and you have up to 12 months to complete it. If we want to make our goal, it will be the pledges that will do it. If you can only do a one-time gift, please try to increase it as your means allow.

B. Let our pledges and gifts to this year's Catholic Charity Appeal let people in need know that God's care is near for them and not far away. Thank you for your generous support last year and for your generous support this year.

## Anonymous

Rick Warren is an evangelical pastor and author of “A Purpose Driven Life” – a very popular spiritual read. Recently, he was asked what changes had come about in his life because of his success. He responded: “My salary used to be \$100,000, and I gave away \$10,000 to charity. Now I make \$1 million annually, and I give away \$900,000.” I tell this story today not because I’m asking you for tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars, but because I am asking for your generosity to the Catholic Charity Appeal, and the story isn’t so much about dollars and cents as it is about generosity. Generous giving is a conscious choice that flows from an awareness of how blessed we are, and how we are called to share our blessings with others. What does our generosity to the Catholic Charity Appeal accomplish? Among the dozens of ministries that we are asked to support, the Appeal is the main source of support for these agencies that:

- provide food, clothing, and shelter to those truly in need;
- develop public policies to promote the Gospel and life and protect marriage in RI;
- provide pastoral care to women who have had abortions;
- provide for children whose mothers struggled to choose against abortion;
- helping immigrants to obtain visas and citizenship, find work, and learn English;
- serving and teaching children and adults with physical and mental disabilities;
- provide funding for hospital chaplains so that Catholics may receive anointing of the sick in emergencies and at the end of life;
- provide pastoral, spiritual and physical care for the elderly and the sick;
- give young people ways in which to keep connected to others like them who are Catholic and want to share and grow their faith.

Without our commitment to the Catholic Charity Appeal, the bishop would not be able to educate seminarians, deacons and priests. Without our support to the Appeal, the Respect Life Office would not be able to fight for those important issues in today's world, to which so many of you have a personal commitment. Simply stated, the Diocese of Providence touches hundreds of thousands of lives in a way that no single person among us could do alone. That's why St. Paul calls us the body of Christ – because, God designed us to work together, to accomplish great things with Christ as our head.

And so I'm asking everyone who has the blessing of calling themselves Catholic and a member of \_\_\_\_\_ Parish to make a gift – not just because the Church has a need (which it does), and not just because the causes are worthy (and they are), but because this is part of what it means to be Catholic. We are different from any other Christian Church in the world – we are “universal.” Being Catholic means we support our parish, and our diocese, and the universal Church throughout the world.

You and I know that the economic condition in Rhode Island and across the country is bleak, and that there's a greater need than ever because it's the poor who suffer the most. And I can't ask you to give anything more than you did last year (unless you gave nothing, in which case I would ask you to join with the rest of us in fulfilling this obligation). Our goal as parish is far less about dollars and sense than it is about participation. There are over \_\_\_\_\_ families who claim membership here at \_\_\_\_\_ parish. That only \_\_\_\_\_ of them help to ensure that our parish does its part to meet the needs of the statewide appeal in which all parishes participate ...

that doesn't do this parish justice, because we see miracles happen here all the time. Everyone comes together for parish causes; faith-filled people come together all the time to work hard and long hours to keep Jesus' mission here alive; to grow this parish family and keep its center of worship a worthy and fitting place to meet God. And it wouldn't be happening if people did not feel rewarded by their service and experience an increase of blessings.

But while charity begins at home, we can't let it end there. There are people beyond these walls, beyond our parish territory, who pray that God will somehow come to their assistance. And this is our time to be the answers to those prayers. Many people much worse off than we are turning to the Catholic Church for help and hope, and we, who are the Church, need to be there to help lighten their burden.

We should be proud of the Catholic Charity Appeal and its awesome works of service and ministry made possible through our generosity. This isn't something about which we should grow weary or complain about our own problems – this opportunity in itself should bring peace to our hearts that the mission of Christ is alive and well 2,000 years after he entrusted his ministry to us. When we do our part to take up that mission of spreading the Gospel message, our faith tells us that God blesses us and rewards us with the joy that we are doing His work, acting as his hands and feet.

During the next few minutes, I ask you to take a moment in prayer during a meditation hymn, to reflect on the generosity of God in your life, and to use the envelopes and pens in your pews



to make a suitable gift that will reflect your appreciation for what you have received from God. Please consider making a pledge of five, ten, or fifteen dollars a month, rather than a 1-time gift. Many of us can afford to give more than that, but no amount is too small because we're in this together, even to the end, when "The King will answer them: "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of these, the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it for me."

Thank you.

## Anonymous

Each year, Forbes magazine publishes a list of the world's richest people. I think it's safe to say that there is no one here today who is a "major player" on that list. But that doesn't mean that we're not wealthy. In fact, a visit to the website [globalrichlist.com](http://globalrichlist.com) allows you to see exactly where you stand in wealth out of the roughly six billion people in the world. You may laugh, but the results can be eye-opening – even jaw-dropping. For example, if you have a yearly income of \$30,000, you are in the top 7.2% of the world's richest people. That means that there are 5.5 billion people in the world who are poorer than you. That's hard to even imagine, let alone believe. If you have a yearly income of \$45,000, you are in the top 1.7% of the world's richest people. That can either cheer you up, or depress you at how desperately poor many in the world are. One way or another, it lets us see things from a very different perspective.

When we hear the words Jesus speaks to us today, "If you love me, you will keep the commandments," let us think not only of the Ten Commandments, but let us also think of the many commandments Jesus himself gave us:

- "Love one another as I have loved you."
- "Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Heavenly Father."
- "Whatever you did for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for me."
- "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more."

May God bless the spirit of generosity in which we respond to Catholic Charities, and to all the many ways in which we live out Jesus' commandments of love and service in our lives, knowing that "the measure we give to others will be the measure we receive from God."

## Anonymous

Whenever we hear Jesus talk about the rich, we tend to discount what he has to say; after all, it doesn't pertain to us; we're not "rich." Let's face it, none of us like to think of ourselves as rich – we like to believe that we are “middle-class.” But the truth of the matter is that even if we're not as rich as Bill and Melinda Gates or Warren Buffett or Mark Zuckerberg, we live in a time and place of unprecedented wealth and convenience, where housing, clean water, electricity, refrigeration, advanced health care, and abundant food are simply not an issue for most of us. The fact is that three billion people in our world live on less than \$2 a day while 1.3 billion get by on less than \$1 per day.

If your salary is \$60,000 a year, you are richer than 99% of the people in the world. Yes, that makes you part of the "1%." If you make \$22,000 a year you are in the top 10% of the wealthiest people in the world. There's no way for us to avoid the truth that Jesus is talking to us: all things considered, we are wealthy. Jesus doesn't condemn us for our wealth, but he does call us to remember the uncertainty of riches and to rely on the God who is the source of all we have, who “richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 Timothy 6:17). We will not be judged for our material possessions, but we will be judged on the ways we choose to make use of them. Those who are "rich in good deeds" (1 Timothy 6:18) are promised the reward of the Kingdom; those who are rich in the eyes of the world are promised nothing beyond what they already enjoy.

**If you would like more information about the Catholic Charity Appeal,  
please call the Office of Stewardship & Development at 277-2121.**