

Archbishop O'Brien praises Catholic Charities' volunteers

As Catholic Charities' volunteers and supporters were treated to a breakfast in their honor at the organization's new Our Daily Bread building in Baltimore Dec. 12, Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien called their labors impressive, efficient and effective.

"What you are doing every day is the work of the Lord, for the people who are most in need and most often forgotten," Archbishop O'Brien said to nearly 200 volunteers and financial contributors at the charitable institution's 27th annual leadership breakfast celebration.

It was the first year the breakfast was held in the new Our Daily Bread building, which was completed in spring of 2007. Our Daily Bread serves meals to 700 homeless men and women daily and has provided employment services to some 2,000 people in the six months it's been open, said Harold A. Smith, executive director of Catholic Charities.

The building was designed so the homeless who eat in the dining facility have to pass by the employment services on their way out, with the hope they will take advantage of the job training opportunities, Mr. Smith said.

In addition to Our Daily Bread, Catholic Charities programs reach out to women who are abused, troubled youths, former prison inmates, senior citizens, and men and women with substance abuse and mental illness; this requires the aid of hundreds of volunteers and financial contributors, said Kevin M. O'Keefe, chairman of the 2007 Catholic Charities Leadership Breakfast Committee.

While applauding the efforts of the volunteers and the leadership of Mr. Smith, Archbishop O'Brien urged the men and women in the audience to join forces with organizations from other faith communities in their mission to help those in need.

Recalling his boyhood in the Bronx section of New York, the archbishop said it was his Jewish neighbors who stepped in to help his family after his father died and his mother was required to enter the workforce. They made sure they had food on the

table and that everyone's homework was complete.

"For as talented, efficient and effective as you all are, you can't do all that needs to be done alone," Archbishop O'Brien said.