

CCHD collection focuses on defending human dignity by fighting poverty

WASHINGTON - Human dignity can be defended by fighting poverty, said the leaders of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development as they prepared for the program's 2010 annual collection, which will be taken up in most parishes Nov. 20-21.

"At this time of great economic suffering, it is more important than ever for the church in the United States, through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ 'to bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives, new sight to the blind and to set the downtrodden free,'" Bishop Roger P. Morin of Biloxi, Miss., chairman of the U.S. bishops' CCHD subcommittee said in a statement.

"CCHD is a unique and essential part of the much broader Catholic commitment to overcome poverty. CCHD pursues 'the institutional path ... of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity that encounters the neighbor directly,'" Bishop Morin added, quoting from Pope Benedict XVI's 2009 encyclical, "Caritas in Veritate" ("Charity in Truth").

He made the comments in a letter to parishes asking Catholics to be as generous as possible during the annual collection that is the primary source of support for the U.S. bishops' domestic anti-poverty program.

For 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau reported a 9.6 percent spike in poverty. Overall, there were 43.6 million people in poverty - 14.3 percent of the population.

For 40 years, CCHD has funded community groups that create affordable housing, obtain fair wages and provide job training, as well as organizing projects led by low-income individuals to help people and resolve problems in their communities.

CCHD-funded programs “empower the poor and marginalized to make decisions, seek solutions to local problems and find ways to improve their lives and neighborhoods,” according to the agency. CCHD also has educational programs to teach Catholics about poverty and creates opportunities for them to interact with the poor and reflect on a faith response to poverty.

Last year, CCHD awarded more than \$7.8 million to 223 grantees throughout the United States; 648 Catholic parishes, 39 Catholic institutions and 31 religious communities were involved in CCHD-funded groups.