

Operation Rice Bowl kicks off for Lent

This Lenten season, thousands of Catholics in the Archdiocese of Baltimore will join millions of believers throughout the United States in supporting Operation Rice Bowl, an annual program sponsored by Baltimore-based Catholic Relief Services to raise awareness on global hunger.

Catholic parishes and schools from more than 12,000 communities will use symbolic rice bowls as the focal point for their Lenten observance.

“Although in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Haiti much of our focus is on the desperate needs there, we cannot forget that every day thousands of children around the world die from hunger and its consequences,” said Beth Martin, program manager for Operation Rice Bowl. “It is because of programs like ORB and our ongoing support for long-term development that we are able to respond swiftly in emergencies like Haiti.”

Operation Rice Bowl provides 40 opportunities to learn about, pray for and help those who don't have enough to eat. Participants make the small sacrifice of preparing simple, meatless recipes each week and putting the money they otherwise would have spent on a big meal into symbolic rice bowls. That money goes to support CRS' mission to fight global hunger and poverty.

“Through Operation Rice Bowl, we read personal stories of people who have been able to improve their lives with CRS' help,” Martin said. “Women receive small loans to start their own businesses; farmers receive training and communities install wells that bring clean water to families.”

With a calendar suggesting daily reflections and prayer, as well as concrete ways to act, participants can observe Lent in both a spiritual and practical way.

Every year, Catholics raise about \$6 million through Operation Rice Bowl, 75 percent of which is used to fund hunger and poverty projects in 40 countries. The remaining 25 percent stays in U.S. dioceses to support food pantries and soup

kitchens.

Since its beginning in 1975, the program has raised more than \$191 million to fund CRS' development projects.

Visit orb.crs.org for more information.