

Source of Pride

The Catholic Review

“We of Catholic Charities are a people of many faces – united by our belief in the infinite worth of every person and a singular commitment to cherish the Divine within us all.”

At the press conference in which I announced my new appointment as pro-grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, a reporter asked what regrets I had during my tenure as Archbishop of Baltimore. Included in my response was my sense that the work of Catholic Charities goes largely ignored by the secular media and thus is lost on most in our community, especially non-Catholics. Given Catholic Charities’ role as the largest private provider of human services – the agency’s 80-plus programs touch the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in need annually in all 10 jurisdictions of the Archdiocese – it is astounding to me that its work could go unrecognized.

Consider that in 2011 Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Baltimore improved the lives of:

- 365,647 hungry people, most of whom were served a hot meal with compassion and respect at Our Daily Bread;
- 1,763 seniors in need of safe and affordable housing in 22 Catholic Charities communities throughout the Archdiocese;
- 553 people through its international adoptions program, foster care and parenting services;
- 10,843 individuals in need of counseling, mental health and treatment at

places such as St. Vincent's Villa, after-school programs and behavioral health clinics;

- 1,424 children and adults enrolled in its Head Start programs, special education schools and the Esperanza Center;
- 1,553 unemployed, disabled or homeless people through programs such as Our Daily Bread Employment Center, Sarah's House, and My Sister's Place;
- 2,379 people in need of health care through Caritas House, the Neighborhoods at St. Elizabeth's, and the Esperanza Center;
- 19,466 of our sisters and brothers in need of casework and emergency services at Our Daily Bread Employment Center and the Samaritan Center, among many others;
- and 857 people with developmental disabilities receiving medical, housing and vocational services.

Perhaps it is the fact that Catholic Charities has been around so long - it can trace its roots to the earliest days of the Diocese and Bishop John Carroll - that its presence and good works are taken for granted.

Of course, the humanitarian works of Catholic Charities are well-known to many in our community, without whom this outstanding agency could not operate. Last year alone some 15,000 volunteers donated more than 227,000 hours in a Catholic Charities program.

The support given Catholic Charities by the parishes of the Archdiocese is legendary, as month-after-month casseroles are unfailingly solicited, prepared and delivered by the good people of our Archdiocese, many themselves in need but always generous to a stranger who might be worse off. Ecumenical and interfaith communities in the Baltimore area are also valuable partners at Our Daily Bread and other Charities efforts.

And the financial support shown to Catholic Charities by the people of our Archdiocese, Catholic and non-Catholic, is both humbling and awe-inspiring. The success of this exemplary agency is also a credit to the capable leadership of Bill McCarthy, who in his brief tenure as executive director has advanced the mission of Catholic Charities through his own Christ-inspired witness and personal dedication.

The breadth and depth of the work of Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Baltimore should be a source of great pride, for it truly is a reflection of the generosity of the people here and this Catholic community's commitment to bringing people closer to Christ by reflecting His love and kindness. It is this local Church's biggest and truest "pro-life" initiative because it seeks to uphold the dignity of every one of the nearly 500,000 lives it touches each year.

That's something worth celebrating!