

# Time to Time

Catholic social teaching calls us to defend the dignity of life through our compassion for the poor and vulnerable, and our commitment to the just treatment of all persons. This week, with the dedication of Catholic Charities' Our Daily Bread Employment Center, we take another bold step toward changing the course of history in the City of Baltimore for thousands of people, and forever altering the fight to eradicate poverty and despair.

This fight is not new. For over 26 years, Our Daily Bread has served the hungry of Baltimore—providing more than five million hot meals in that time. Here in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Our Daily Bread has become a symbol of our commitment to serving those who are less fortunate and living among us. In many of the parishes in this Archdiocese, you will find a sign-up sheet or a stack of aluminum casserole pans awaiting the eager hands of parishioners who so faithfully labor each month to cook, transport, and even serve our city's hungry. Physical nourishment, however, is not going to break the cycle of poverty that is so pervasive in many of our city's neighborhoods.

An ancient proverb says, "Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish and he will eat for a lifetime." This is the guiding principle of the new Our Daily Bread Employment Center, the region's first comprehensive resource center enabling people to satisfy their hunger for food as well as self-sufficiency through employment and stable housing.

The goal of ODBEC is to provide the resources for people to achieve self-sufficiency through employment and housing. The opportunity is provided by the Center; the achievement is earned by the individual.

Our Daily Bread Employment Center will house three existing Catholic Charities programs—Our Daily Bread's daily hot meal program; Christopher Place Employment Academy, a residential program for formerly homeless men aimed at employment and permanent housing; and the Maryland Re-Entry Partnership, which enables formerly incarcerated men to reintegrate into the community.

Chosen by Baltimore City to develop this unique concept, with financial support by individuals, corporations, foundations, and governmental sources, Catholic Charities believes that ODBEC will offer society's best effort to provide opportunities for people to help themselves and their families escape the impact of poverty.

Among the services provided by Catholic Charities at ODBEC are eviction prevention, job readiness, job placement, basic education for adults, and recovery support. Workshops on home ownership, financial literacy and healthy relationships will also be provided.

We are called to be "communities of salt and light," by the United States Catholic Bishops, by providing concrete acts of charity to the hurting, the poor, and the vulnerable in our midst. Catholic Charities is writing the ultimate turnaround story here in Baltimore. We know that helping people turn from a life mired in chronic poverty to a life of self-reliance is perhaps the greatest act of charity one can make. Please join me in praying for God's blessing on this facility, on all who will serve in it with charity and love in their hearts, and most especially on the countless people who will enter in despair and depart in dignity.