

Young Catholic urges donation of money

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Rich Halvorson is counting on 10 million Americans to fast with him Ash Wednesday, Feb. 21, and to donate the money they would have spent on food to what he terms “highly efficient” charities.

Mr. Halvorson, a 25-year-old Catholic from Boise, Idaho, believes the donations could reach \$50 million. The charities he’s contacted are themselves willing to match funds donated to accomplish specific projects.

The Ash Wednesday program is called Global Fast ‘07 — because Mr. Halvorson expects there to be a Global Fast ‘08 next year.

Mr. Halvorson, a Harvard University graduate who has already written on international politics for the Miami Herald before embarking on Global Fast, said the idea came to him as he conducted a five-day fast last year; a friend of his was conducting an even longer fast.

“It was a water (only) fast,” Halvorson told Catholic News Service in a Dec. 21 telephone interview from Boise, where he was spending Christmas with his family. “The way that I did it wasn’t the best idea at the time. It was a water fast except that I worked out every day and after my workout I would allow myself one sip of (a) protein (shake). ... I would have been better off not working out during the fast.”

Mr. Halvorson’s benchmark for “highly efficient” charities is those that spend an overwhelming amount of donations on the mission of their particular charity with little overhead. His Web site, www.gf07.com, lists 15 faith-based charities, all of whom spend at least 75 percent of their funds on such projects.