

To be read at all Masses on October 7 & 8, 2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today we celebrate the acts of mercy and love made visible in our diocese through the power of God and the work of Catholic Charities. Serving our diocese for more than a century, Catholic Charities is an instrument in proclaiming the compassionate love of Jesus Christ.

In my short time as your bishop, I have seen first-hand how Catholic Charities brings the Good News to the least of our sisters and brothers. During a visit to Catholic Parish Outreach in Raleigh, the largest food pantry in our diocese, I met volunteers providing for emergency needs of low-income families and staff providing family support to Hispanics from Centro Para Familias Hispanas in Raleigh. I know that other crucial services are provided through Catholic Charities' seven regional offices across our diocese. I look forward to visiting them.

As Jesus opens His Sacred Heart for us, Catholic Charities opens its doors across eastern North Carolina, welcoming the poor, the vulnerable and the disenfranchised. At this place, people find emergency aid, such as food, or for assistance with rent or a utility bill. Beyond this starting point, a staff person or volunteer learns more about the family's situation and may provide additional assistance in the form of case management, counseling, literacy classes and other means of empowering individuals to achieve the fullness of life God intends for everyone.

I encourage you to seek Christ in the homeless, the hungry child, the frail elderly, the migrant worker, the young couple wishing to adopt, and the neighbor facing a loss and needing counseling. All these and tens of thousands more are served by Catholic Charities. I extend profound gratitude for your support of Catholic Charities through your gifts to the Bishop's Annual Appeal, and I convey special thanks to all who continue to give of their resources throughout the year. Through your parish involvement, monetary donations and volunteerism, you make possible the work of Catholic Charities and its response to those in need.

I thank you for your generous support and commend all those associated with the office of Catholic Charities for their invaluable and dedicated service. May God bless you abundantly as you continue to be an instrument reflecting His healing and saving love in our parishes, within our communities and throughout our Diocese.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge
Bishop of Raleigh