

Serving all regardless of background, faith, or circumstance.



“Bless you for what you’re doing. It really helps the people that really need it.” – Georgia S.

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Reaching out to serve hungry neighbors

GEORGIA S. LIVES IN CULPEPER. Elderly, a diabetic who had trouble walking, she was bedridden when the St. Joseph’s Table pantry across the street opened three years ago. One day a pantry volunteer came over and asked her if she needed food.

“They usually come over here and knock on my door and say, ‘Is anybody picking up your food today?’” Georgia says. “And then sometimes they’ll bring it over to me.”

Georgia is one of the many people helped by the parishioners of Precious Blood Catholic Church. For years, the parish has worked with Catholic Charities to serve hungry people. Once a month, the St. Lucy Food Project would drop off a truck at the church. Parishioners would fill the truck with non-perishable food

and send it back to the St. Lucy warehouse in Manassas for distribution around the diocese.

Then Covid-19 hit. Fr. Kevin Walsh and his parishioners started finding out about many neighbors who were struggling. They’d gotten sick or had lost their jobs and were running low on food to feed their families. That’s how the idea of starting a food pantry in a former rectory on the church property was born.

“When the pandemic came, I said to the parishioners, ‘Folks, I think it would be great to have a food pantry here,’” Fr. Walsh said. “I had heard the phrase St. Joseph’s Table used before. He happens to be my patron saint, my confirmation name. So I said, ‘Let’s call it St. Joseph’s Table.’” → *continued on page 2*

“**It’s been a wonderful partnership. We have the place here on the ground. We’ve got the need. We’ve got the volunteers. Catholic Charities has been just so great in providing the vast majority of our food that we’re able to give out to people.**”

– FR. KEVIN WALSH

“The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all misery.”

-Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, 2013

Dear Friends,

By the time this edition of our newsletter reaches you the holy days of Christmas will be near. For many of us this means an opportunity to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with family, friends, and fellow parishioners. We are reminded of the blessing of belonging, of being loved and valued, of being part of a community.

In 2013, Cardinal Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, called each of us to leave the comfortable confines of our parishes and homes and seek out people who are suffering and isolated wherever they may be. Poverty, whether material or spiritual, is often a source of shame for many, especially in a society where material wealth seems to be the measure of a person's value. This can also be incredibly isolating.

Jesus was, and is, a man of action, constantly moving beyond not only geographic but also cultural boundaries and limitations. When we read about the healing miracles of Jesus at least two things always happen: People are in fact healed – the blind can see, the lame can walk, the lepers are cured – and just as importantly, those who are healed are restored to community. They belong once again.

In our own way Catholic Charities attempts to follow Jesus as He leads us to the poor, and vulnerable within our own diocese, whomever and wherever they may be. Whether that be through distributing food and hygiene items to thousands of people from the Shenandoah Valley to the Northern Neck; or offering counseling services in-person and virtually, so that more people have access; or simply providing a place to gather for seniors where they experience companionship and love, we pray that through our actions people are healed and renewed.

None of this work is possible without the generosity of so many people, just like you. As we give thanks to God for all of the blessings He bestows on us, please remember our brothers and sisters in Christ, perhaps even members of our own families, who may be suffering and are waiting to be restored to community.

Gratefully yours in Christ,



STEPHEN CARATTINI

President and CEO

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington

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Reaching out to serve hungry neighbors



Pantry manager, Daniel Solaris, and a volunteer pack boxes inside the St. Joseph's Table food pantry in Culpeper.

Parishioners began contributing food, but it wasn't long before organizers realized they needed a more robust source of food. The pantry director contacted the St. Lucy Food Project to ask for help.

“It's been a wonderful partnership,” Fr. Walsh says. “We have the place here on the ground. We've got the need. We've

got the volunteers. Catholic Charities has been just so great in providing the vast majority of our food that we're able to give out to people.”

Program director Vincent Cannava says St. Lucy provides about 90 percent of the pantry's food.

One recent day, Georgia noted, “I got some chicken and hamburger and two cans of fruit and green beans,” as well

as a bag of rice and cereal.

She keeps a recipe book handy on pantry days to find ways to use the food she receives – non-perishable canned and boxed vegetables, fruit, beans, fresh produce, and meat.

“Bless you for what you're doing,” she says of Catholic Charities and her pantry neighbor. “It really helps the people that really need it.” †



How to help

To organize a food drive with your parish or community, drop off food, or donate food virtually via the Amazon wish list contact James.McCaskey@ccda.net or call 703-637-2547.



Bishop Michael Burbidge at St. Martin de Porres Senior Center in Alexandria, Virginia.

Seniors Welcome a Shepherd to the Center

In October Bishop Michael Burbidge visited Catholic Charities St. Martin de Porres Senior Center in Alexandria.

He swapped stories, played games, toured the garden and encouraged participants – Catholic and those of other faiths – to bring peace to our world by sharing love, kindness and forgiveness with those whom they encounter.

The bishop's visit to the center was much anticipated by Catholic Charities staff and senior center participants as two previously scheduled visits had to be canceled during the Covid pandemic.

St. Martin de Porres has served seniors for more than four decades in a building that was once a Lutheran Church. Its participants are diverse: men and women, ages ranging from 60's to 80's. While all live within the city of Alexandria, they grew up across the world, from Virginia to Pittsburgh and New York – to Korea, China, Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, and Afghanistan.

Juanita Balenger, director of the senior center, introduced the bishop to the 30 seniors who were there. She gave him a tour of the activity rooms and the vegetable garden out back.

One participant, a Dallas Cowboy fan, said she especially liked meeting the bishop because he seemed humble and down to earth – even though he roots for the Philadelphia Eagles. "I really enjoyed what he had to say," she said.

Love Always Looks Like Something

Years ago, I was listening to a radio program where they were discussing "things we believe in but cannot see."

First, they mentioned *time*. "We all believe time exists, but we cannot see it," they said. "We have watches, clocks, and sundials, but they are not time. They are only instruments of time. "

Then they mentioned *love*. They said, "There is the embrace, a kiss, the holding of hands, but that is not love. They are only expressions of love."

I know they were not having a theological discourse on love that day, but we are. We, who are about to enter a beautiful season of love called Christmas, are celebrating the birth of Love. We say: love always looks like something. It's incarnate. God – who is love – became flesh and dwells among us.

Because of the birth of Christ... Love always looks like something! It is the embrace, it is the kiss, it is giving food to the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, welcoming the stranger, and counseling the lonely. And it is a tiny baby born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago.

All who volunteer at Catholic Charities allow love to be born again, each and every day.

A sacrificial gift to Catholic Charities brings light and love into our world this winter season.

Because of Christmas, love always looks like something!

Love and blessings,



F. Robert Cilinski

FATHER ROBERT CILINSKI
Episcopal Vicar for
Charitable Works



JOIN US

Friday, February 2, 2024
6:30 p.m.



“We are overwhelmed with gratitude to have been invited to Chair the 2024 Catholic Charities Ball. The opportunity to serve and work with Catholic Charities whose mission is to help the most vulnerable is a true blessing. It is incredible to witness the zeal of amazing individuals whose commitment and care provide the cornerstone upon which the Catholic Charities Ball has been built. Through the extraordinary generosity of donors, volunteers, and staff, Catholic Charities serves the poor, protects the vulnerable, and welcomes the newcomer. We are truly honored and blessed to contribute our efforts to this remarkable organization and spectacular event that renews our community’s commitment to make God’s love visible and present to those in need.”

ALYSSA GARCIA & AIMEE VIANA,
2024 BALL CO-CHAIRS

Since 1982, the Catholic Charities Ball has been a volunteer-led effort and annual winter tradition in the diocese – a beautiful evening dedicated to celebrating the work of Catholic Charities and raising the critical funds needed to serve the poor, protect the vulnerable and welcome the newcomer.

We hope that you will join us on Friday, February 2, 2024, to gather, rejoice, and celebrate. The great work of Catholic Charities is only possible thanks to the generosity of our donors and volunteers.

HELP US MEET OUR DONATION GOAL OF \$1.4M.



To make a reservation or to donate, please visit ccda.net/ball, or scan the code.

Special Needs Adoptions Bring Abundant Blessings



Every child is a gift!

“I’VE NEVER FELT THAT ABORTION was the right option for me, but this was the first time in my life that I had cause to consider it.”

When Jessica was 10-weeks pregnant she found out she was expecting a little boy who had more than a 95% chance of having Down syndrome.

She had been excited to bring another child into her family and for her daughter to have a sibling. But as a single parent, she was afraid of what this diagnosis would mean, and she considered terminating her pregnancy.

“Other than his diagnosis, he was a healthy baby, full of potential.” Jessica’s resolution to carry her pregnancy defied the odds as, sadly, 67% of woman facing the same diagnosis choose to terminate their pregnancy.

Jessica also realized early on that adoption was likely the best option for her. A Catholic Charities pregnancy counselor helped her work through her

complicated emotions. Jessica became empowered to make a plan that was best for her and her child.

When Matt and Ally began their adoption journey they agreed to “be open to any child and happily accept whoever God brought to us.” When they heard that an expectant parent was seeking an adoptive family for a special needs baby, they stepped up.

“Although we didn’t know a lot about Down syndrome, we asked ourselves why we wouldn’t say ‘yes’. As time went on, we had many conversations about what this could mean for our family,

what long term care would look like, what the child’s specific needs would be and how this would change our family,” said Ally. “Every time those fears would creep in, God would bring us peace.”

Matt and Ally were exactly what Jessica was hoping to find in an adoptive family. “After I met them, I felt such a sense of peace. I had prayed for a very specific family, and God provided,” Jessica said. She knew she wanted an “open adoption,” which includes a relationship with her birth son and his adoptive family.

Ally and Matt feel great joy and wonder at how God’s plans for their family unfolded. “Down syndrome is not a clear-cut diagnosis,” said Ally, “And our son surprises us every day. Every child is a blessing. But there is something extra special seeing a child with special needs reach milestones or achieve more than you were told is possible. It is a constant reminder of God’s goodness and grace towards us.”

Catholic Charities is blessed to bring families like these together. Recently, we have encountered more pregnant women facing a prenatal diagnosis and seeking services, and an increased need for families open to adopting medically complex children. Families of faith are more than twice as likely to adopt a child with special needs than other adoptive families, according to a survey by the Barna Group. Creating a pathway for families to say “yes” in this way is an authentically pro-life response. †



Learn more about Pregnancy and Adoption Services

Catholic Charities believes that adoption is a lifelong journey, one that impacts all members of the adoption triad (birth family, adoptive family, and adoptee). Therefore, we remain a lifelong resource for all of our clients.

Learn more at <https://www.ccca.net/need-help/pregnancy-and-adoption-services/>

Holiday Blues

Tips for navigating psychological landmines during Christmas and beyond



The winter holiday season, including Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's, conjures up the words "festive," "families," "celebration" and more. But for people who have no family or friends with whom to share the holiday or who have frayed relationships, this time of year can bring about feelings of sadness, not joy.

Catholic Charities offers mental health counseling, through in-person and virtual sessions, to help adults and children deal with depression, loneliness, anxiety and more.

Tips to combat loneliness and depression, offered by therapists from Catholic Charities Family Services mental health counseling.

- 1. Schedule time to communicate with others** – Plan to facetime, call, text with those who are not immediately around us.
- 2. Change your environment** – Staying in one place by ourselves can lead to isolation. Get outside your house: go to a park, a church event, or any area where you can be around others.
- 3. Take up a new project** – A creative outlet helps maintain a healthy sense of productivity and self-satisfaction. Do an art project, play, dance or listen to music, bake, read a book.
- 4. Focus on caring for yourself** – Engage in relaxing activities, go outdoors when possible, and focus on the 3 pillars of self-care: eat well, sleep well, and get regular physical activity.
- 5. Avoid comparing yourself with others** – Comparison breeds loneliness. Avoid social media and other outlets that cause us to compare our daily lives to the "highlights" other people share of theirs.
- 6. Be patient with yourself** – It takes time to grow. Focus on the small things you can change effectively. Remember the adage, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

Volunteering boosts faith – and our mental health



Volunteer Daisy Santos, who attend St. Anthony of Padua in Falls Church, pitches in at the new Alexandria Food Pantry.

WHY DOES VOLUNTEERING MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD?

Pope Francis has called volunteers "the strength of the Church" and a dimension of the Church's mission. Indeed, many volunteers give their time as a way of living out their faith. Volunteering helps us grow closer to God and neighbor.

Science also bears out that volunteering makes you feel good! When you do something that you enjoy, your body releases endorphins, which Harvard Health calls the "brain's natural pain reliever." These endorphins create a sense of well-being, and may possibly be a boost for helping others.

In a study published in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, researchers found people who volunteered at least once a month reported better mental health than those who volunteered rarely or not at all.

The Cleveland Clinic explains that lacking human contact or feeling alone can flood a person's body with cortisol. This not only causes more bodily stress, but contributes to many other negative health risks, including depression.

Saying yes to volunteering offers the chance for meaningful connection. It enables you to build friendships, share in social interaction, and encounters. Volunteering offers you a chance to take your thoughts off yourself – and the worry over your own battles – and can provide a fresh perspective. Driven by empathy, you can put yourself in the shoes of others facing hardships and often want to help more. It also enables you to contribute positively to the world.

As Pope Francis said earlier this year, "those who sacrifice their time and effort discover that whatever they give without expecting anything in return is never lost, but becomes instead a great treasure." †

Meet Bernadette Macdonald



“I am thankful that Our Lord has given me an opportunity to use my gifts and talents for His greater glory.”

– BERNADETTE MACDONALD, VOLUNTEER

Tell us about your background.

My father was a doctor, my mother a nurse. I thought there were only three choices for women in the workforce: secretary, teaching, or healthcare. I went into nursing, and worked in a variety of areas. After my divorce, I returned to school. I was a single mother working full-time, so it took 11 years to get my bachelor's degree. Eventually I went into mental health nursing. I got a master's degree from The Catholic University and started a private practice. I'm now retired, but I still do home visits for a few long-time clients.

What do you do as a volunteer for Catholic Charities?

I provide mental health counseling as a volunteer at the (Catholic Charities Mother of Mercy Free Medical) clinic in Woodbridge. Sometime my work can be draining, due to all the violence and trauma some clients experience, but it is very rewarding.

I start my day by going into the clinic chapel and asking for God's Help. I say a special prayer by Saint Teresa of Calcutta: *Jesus, my patient, how sweet it is to serve you; while you the patient bear my thoughts with patience, seek my intention which is to love and serve you. God increase my faith, bless my efforts and work now and forever more, as I begin my work. Amen.*

Please share a story or two about your work.

On any day, I often hear how many people have experienced violence in their life... or drinking, maladaptive behaviors... it's often multi-generational.

One day a couple came to the clinic. She didn't want to have the baby she was carrying, but I could see he wanted this child. She appeared depressed, so I was called in. Working with them both, we were able to address some of their challenges and improve her mood. They are now receiving support in many ways they wouldn't have had access to.

They made the decision to parent together. I still hope and pray for them.

What do you find rewarding?

I feel I'm doing what I am supposed to be doing and I feel at peace, and I leave it in God's hands if I'm doing good. I enjoy going in; we all are on a shared mission. And I am thankful that Our Lord has given me an opportunity to use my gifts and talents for His greater glory. †

Call for Volunteers!



To learn more about our volunteer opportunities and ways you can get involved, please visit volunteer.ccca.net or email Debra Beard at debra.beard@ccda.net.

Catholic Charities
Future Needs

You can leave a gift to Catholic Charities in your will or trust with as little as one sentence.

For information view our website ccda.net or contact John French at (703) 841-3819 or john.french@arlingtondiocese.org.



Workplace Giving

Every day, Catholic Charities brings transformational services, delivered with compassion, to meet the needs of every person who seeks our help, regardless of background, belief, or circumstance.

You can be a part of this transformation by making a pledge to Catholic Charities during this CFC campaign season.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington's CFC number is #24770

The CFC also allows:

- You to pledge volunteer hours to help Catholic Charities serve tens of thousands of clients each year; and
- Federal retirees to make a recurring donation by a deduction from their annuity.

Please remember to check "YES" to share your pledge information so we can keep you updated on the impact of your gift.

Thank you for your generous support of our work.

It's Easy to Donate Online!

To make a gift online, visit ccda.net/donate or scan here →



Mark Your Calendar for These Upcoming Events!

- Dec. 31, 2023** Deadline for 2023 Charitable Contributions
- Feb. 2, 2024** Catholic Charities Ball

CATHOLIC CHARITIES, DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

*Join Us—Together,
We're Transforming Lives!*



St. Ambrose Catholic Church volunteers collected more than 4,000 pounds of food for the St. Lucy Food Project.



200 N. Glebe Road, Suite 250
Arlington, VA 22203

Join Our Online Community



Our Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) number is 24770.