



## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Much publicity has been generated within the last several months about the great challenges presented to our society by the pervasive poverty that surrounds us. The staggering statistical information that has been highlighted by a number of local agencies is jarring and invites us as a Diocesan family to re-enforce our efforts and examine new initiatives to address this most serious problem in accordance with the command of Jesus Christ to “love the Lord your God” and to “love your neighbor as yourself.” (Cf. *Matthew 22: 34-40*).

Our Diocese has been blessed for a great many years by the outstanding ministry of Catholic Charities. The tireless efforts of so many who comprise its multiple agencies, emergency services, support services, special needs, housing services and food services have responded in a magnificent way to the difficult circumstances that many face who live in poverty within our 12 county Diocese of Rochester, the Catholic Church in our midst. Just in 2014, Catholic Charities positively contributed to the lives of nearly 250,000 individuals throughout our Diocese as evidenced in the attached Catholic Charities’ Service Matrix. The generous support of so many Catholics within our Diocese to the annual Catholic Ministries Appeal has supported these Catholic Charities initiatives that have helped countless numbers over the years. Individual parishes and faith communities likewise have enriched the lives of many who live “on the peripheries” of society and are greatly in need of assistance so they may live in a way which reflects their full human dignity as God’s children. But more work remains for all of us, using our particular gifts, talents and resources. The exemplary work done by all of our parishes and faith communities is so vast that it is difficult to quantify, yet still deserves particular mention and support.

Catholic Social Teaching has consistently proclaimed the truth contained in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which calls us to respect, to uplift and to assist the poor and vulnerable within society, the people with whom Jesus often identified himself. “The Church’s love for the poor ... is a part of her constant tradition. This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and the concern for the poor.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2443). Pope

Emeritus Benedict XVI reminded us especially of the suffering of children who are affected by poverty: “When poverty strikes the family, the children prove to be the most vulnerable victims ...” (*Message for Celebration of World Day of Peace, 2009*). Pope Francis continues to call our attention to the plight of the poor and child poverty: “...[I]t is unfathomable that are so many children without education, so many poor persons...” (*Meeting with Students of Jesuit Schools, June 7, 2013*).

Taking to heart the message of Pope Francis and his predecessors, as well as uniting with the Church’s history of service in the United States since the Catholic faith was first brought to these shores, Catholic Charities, the Diocesan Presbyteral Council and the Diocesan Public Policy Committee are working together to help our parishes and schools respond even more effectively to those living in poverty, particularly child poverty in our communities. You are encouraged to study carefully the ideas and suggestions included in the attached educational packet and to make contact with the regional Justice and Peace staff at your regional Catholic Charities Office as you plan your initiatives or to learn what else can be done to serve Our Lord in our brothers and sisters. Further educational material will be available in September. Thank you for your leadership as we take up the Gospel challenge to proclaim and bring the “Good News to the poor.” (Cf. Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18).

Asking God to bless our efforts to serve the needs of our sisters and brothers who have so little, and invoking the intercession of our diocesan patron, Saint John Fisher, whose commitment to the faith bestowed upon him the crown of martyrdom, I remain

Devotedly yours in Christ,

+ *Salvatore R. Matano*

*The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano*  
*Bishop of Rochester*