Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In October of 2018, we will celebrate the closing of the 150th anniversary of our Diocese. In addition, over the next few months I will have the joy of continuing my visits to so many of our parishes and communities across our beloved Diocese. I grow with you in our rich, prayerful history and witness the generous love and compassion we have for each other in following the example given to us by our Blessed Lord.

Beginning with our first bishop, Bishop Michael Heiss, our Diocese heard and answered the call to be the hands, eyes, feet and heart of Jesus Christ in the world. Catholic Social Teaching instructs us that the Church proclaims human life as sacred and every person is precious. This is at the heart of our Catholic tradition.

In 1872, Bishop Heiss developed the Diocesan Catholic Welfare Bureau to fulfill this calling; this mission. The Catholic Welfare Bureau began by assisting local orphans and widows. Today it has grown into our Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse. While the name has changed, their mission, our mission in proclaiming that each human life is precious and significant, is still the same. They are our representatives in serving the widow, the poor, the homeless, the immigrant, and the marginalized. They give voice to those who are voiceless. They are our representatives of service to so many in need.

They need the support of all in the Diocese to continue this work. Please take a few moments to read the stories contained in this Annual Report. See the numbers of your neighbors who have received assistance. It takes all of us working together to continue this tradition of care. Catholic Charities can't do the work without our support! I ask that you continue your prayers and financial support for this important ministry. May God bless you for investing in a ministry that inspires hope to so many in our Diocese.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop William Patrick Callahan, OFM Conv.
Diocese of La Crosse, WI

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On the Cover

Our cover is an original piece of artwork created for us by one of our wonderful volunteers, Angela Garavalia. It highlights the center portion of our agency’s logo—the heart and the cross.

Angie volunteers over 20 hours per week at our La Crosse downtown location. She is the first face that many of our La Crosse clients see as they come through our door. Angie has been volunteering as a front desk volunteer since 2012. We are very blessed to have Angie at Catholic Charities!
Dear Friends of Catholic Charities,

Mankind’s questions, “Who am I” and “What am I here for,” have been asked since the beginning of time. The answers have been given by God Himself. He created us out of love, in His image, and for the purpose of loving Him and one another. He created us man and woman with body and soul, and gave us the power to be procreators of life with Him. Because we so often choose to separate ourselves from God, He sent His only son Jesus Christ to save us from death, to show us the way back to Him, and to teach us the truth. For that purpose, He established the Catholic Church which, for the past 2000 years, has been blessed with a very long list of wise men and women, men and women like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Teresa of Avila, and St. John Paul II, who have explained His teachings for our benefit.

The mission of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse is to put these teachings and all of Christ’s Gospel of Life into practice by promoting respect for the dignity of every human person, and by meeting with concrete actions the challenges of our fallen nature. We do this by helping individuals and families who are marginalized by some type of poverty. Thousands of donors, volunteers and staff are working diligently towards this end. Their love and generosity is the antidote to the evils that threaten to destroy us. The results are encouraging. In 2017, our Community Homeless Facilities (warming centers and day centers) have provided shelter for over 1,378 unduplicated guests, and St. Lawrence Community Services has assisted over 4,900 individuals and families with their finances. The Immigration Department has assisted 262 people, the Adoption Department has finalized 38 adoptions, and our Disability Services program, which works with children and adults with severe mental health disabilities, has served 50 individuals. For us, each individual served is Christ Himself.

We can only do this work because of the generosity of our 1,900+ volunteers, the sacrifices and financial support of our donors, and the dedication and hard work of our staff. All of us who work at Catholic Charities are truly thankful to you for your support and to our Lord, who has given us the opportunity to serve His people. Thank you!

In Christ,

Mr. Roberto Partarrieu
Executive Director Catholic Charities

Our Mission and Vision

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse proclaims Christ’s Gospel of Life and promotes human dignity by alleviating poverty and strengthening individuals and families.

Believing in the presence of God in our midst, and called by the Diocesan Bishop, Catholic Charities proclaims the sanctity of human life and the dignity of the person by sharing in the mission of Jesus given to the Church. To this end, Catholic Charities works with individuals, families and communities to help them meet their needs, address their issues, eliminate oppression, and build a just and compassionate society.
When people find out I am without a car, no one shudders to find out I am carless; but when they found out I was without a home, that I was homeless, so many looks changed." This was not something Heidi liked to share with others. Many people that she had worked with and went to church with had no idea that when Heidi went to bed at night, for a while, it was in a bed at the Sojourner House.

Heidi was a registered nurse who finally admitted she was an alcoholic. She found herself unemployed and with no place to call home. Like so many who find themselves homeless, it is not something that necessarily happens overnight. She admits to making mistakes. She admits to being human. With nowhere to go, she was directed to the Sojourner House. There she says she found a warm bed, a shower, and clean clothes...a refuge. She also found something more, she found compassion. Compassion from the volunteers who welcomed her in each night. Compassion from staff members who listened to her story and offered her support. Compassion from community members who she knew supported the Sojourner House and kept the doors open. She felt like she had hope again.

Today Heidi attends regular AA meetings, has her own apartment and works a couple of different jobs. She continues to work towards goals she has set, but she also works with others who find themselves where she had been. "I am so grateful to those who helped me when I was in need. I never imagined a life in which I was homeless, but I found myself there. I needed help and now it’s my turn to help others."

What are your goals? Whether it is through Sr. Lawrence Community Services, Disability Services, Project Step Up, or one of our Community Homeless Facilities, when someone comes to us for service we don’t just ask what they need, but what their goals are and how we can help them achieve their goals. Such was the case with Pete, one of our Beyond Shelter residents.

When we first met Pete he was struggling with addiction and was enrolled in a drug treatment program that was ending soon. He was working each day to stay clean. There was no real plan for anything else!

But what happens after the program is done? Go back to the shelter? Go back to a life surrounded by others still struggling with the same problems Pete was trying to overcome? No place to live? Walking the streets each day applying for jobs he would never get because he couldn’t pass a background check? Eating lunch 6 days a week at the Salvation Army? Dinner at the local churches? THAT’S THE PLAN?

Then it happened, Pete got a call. Not just any call, “THE CALL” and it was two days before graduating his drug treatment program. "Come to the Catholic Charities office on November 3rd. You have housing" and so much more. Pete was eligible to become a resident in one of our Beyond Shelter Homes.

Beyond Shelter is a program working to fill the need of housing first. Staff is on hand to help residents build necessary skills to be successful. We help them set goals, connect them with community resources and walk the journey with them in their effort to obtain and maintain a sustainable living environment.

At the Beyond Shelter houses we talk a lot about goals and we work on them daily. Goal #1? "Help you stay housed". Goal #2? “Help you with whatever your other goals are”.

“I want to be in my kid’s life.” Pete said.

“What, you have a kid?” Dan, our Program Director responded.

“Yeah, that's why I had to get clean.” he said.

Over the next couple of months Dan worked with Pete to accomplish this goal. He collaborated with our Adoption Social Worker who provided the paperwork to get parental rights established with the court. They collaborated with our Project Step Up Coordinator who had connections with an employee training program. Pete discovered that the “housing and so much more” was a team of individuals, a community that is there to support him and walk the journey; hopefully a journey that walks him back to a stronger relationship with his daughter.
Thank you to over 1,498 volunteers who provided over 37,317 hours of volunteer time. This donation of time is equivalent to a savings of $478,632. Pictured to the left is Sandy Johnston. She started volunteering at the La Crosse Warming Center about three years ago. She continues to volunteer at the Warming Center but also volunteers for the Franciscan Hospitality House and our East Avenue office front desk. We need everyone to join with us; whether it is through volunteering time, talent or treasure. Pope Francis states, “True charity requires courage: let us overcome the fear of getting our hands dirty so as to help those in need” (Twitter, 2013). We need everyone to help make a difference; to help those in need and to offer hope to so many in need. Thank you Sandy and all of the men and women who join with us in service!

Complete 990 Statements are available online at ccls.org.

Your Help by the Numbers

$371,174 Total financial assistance and charitable outreach was provided for utility, food, transportation, health related issues, housing, clothing and other basic human needs.

25,217 Sheltered nights of service were provided to the many poor, hurting, homeless, and often “faceless” people across our Diocese through our Community Homeless Facilities. An 8% increase from 2016.

1,464 Homeless men and women or those living on the edge of homelessness were able to shower, wash their clothes, get a haircut, or receive some type of community service at one of our Community Homeless Facilities.

170 Individuals who were formerly homeless worked with our CHF staff and our St. Lawrence Community Services Financial Wellness Advocates to find a place to call home.

63,296 Hours of service were provided to adults with disabilities and students with behavioral disorders, autism spectrum disorders, and other developmental disabilities. The Disability Services Program helps them stay in their homes and be successful in school.

12,480 Hours of certified staff time was dedicated to advocacy, bankruptcy and housing counseling, foreclosure prevention, charitable outreach and financial education and enrichment to 2,379 families and individuals through St. Lawrence Community Services.

441 Individuals received confidential and supportive assistance with budgeting their fixed income to meet their basic needs while planning for future goals through our Representative Payee Program.

38 Birth parents supported through pregnancy to live birth through our pregnancy support program.

42 Children found forever families through our birth parent, relative adoption and international adoption programs.

240 Immigration clients from over 29 different countries received legal services in their quest for U.S. citizenship or permanent residency.

3,804 Families and individuals benefited from the encouragement and instruction received through our Post Adoption Program.
In grateful appreciation of its benefactors, Catholic Charities is pleased to acknowledge your gifts. It is only through your generosity and financial support that Catholic Charities is able to continue its care to those in need. Your support serves as the heart and hands of Christ.

We compile the lists in our annual report with care. If you find your name has been omitted or misspelled, please accept our apology. Any errors or omissions are inadvertent and we would be grateful if you notify us so our records will be correct in the future. Unfortunately space would not allow us to list all of our generous donors.

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Cornerstone of Charity - Working Together to Build Hope

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ~Matthew 16:18

Catholic Charities is proud to have launched our monthly giving program, Cornerstone of Charity. We truly regard these donors and their consistency as a foundation, a cornerstone, on which we build our agency. Learn more about becoming one of our Cornerstones by visiting us online at www.cclse.org or calling our development staff at 888-212-4357.
Catholic Charities is frequently asked, “I’m not Catholic, can you help me?” – Of course! Because our mission is based on Catholic Social Teaching, we are compelled to help ALL in need, regardless of religion, race, gender, or demographic. We partner with many other civic and religious organizations in the area to complement our services and strive for well-rounded care for those we serve.

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