

THE
CLARION
NEWS FROM CATHOLIC CHARITIES

FALL 2019



THE *Nativity* OF OUR LORD

REMINDS US OF THE GREAT POTENTIAL THAT ENTERS THE WORLD

WHEN A *Child* IS BORN.

BEING CHRIST-LIKE TO *Our Children*

If you are like us, you cannot help but smile as you look at the faces of the innocent children on the opposite page. Throughout the Gospel, we are instructed to look to our children as an example of faith, “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child is the same greatest in the kingdom of heaven,” (Matthew 18:3-4). The reasons that so many of our brothers and sisters live in poverty are many, going beyond parents finding a job. Catholic Charities is counted on to help parents and children living in poverty realize a better future for themselves. This is why we are committed to our vision of creating “Generation Zero”—the first generation of children free from spiritual, financial, and emotional poverty.

Christmastime provides an especially acute reminder that Christ was born in poverty, his family had to flee their home, and that blessed St. Joseph lovingly adopted Mary’s son and our savior Jesus Christ. These conditions carry on in people’s lives today, right here in northern Indiana. Because of you, our Church is able to respond to threats to human life and dignity, and to marriage and family, and to the well-being of innocent children through the good works of Catholic Charities.

On behalf of the families we serve, we remain deeply grateful for your prayers, volunteer time, and financial gifts.

This Christmas, may God grant all of us joyous-childlike hearts.
We wish you a Blessed Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

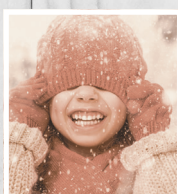
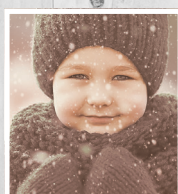
Gloria Whitcraft, CEO

Gloria Whitcraft

On the cover: *Nativity* by Jean-Baptiste Marie Pierre (1714-1789)



M E R R Y
Christmas
 FROM
GENERATION ZERO



**THE FIRST GENERATION OF CHILDREN
 FREE FROM POVERTY**

The Nativity of Our Lord reminds us of the great potential that comes into the world when a child is born. We see this potential everyday in the families we serve and strive to create a generation of children free from poverty — what we call

Generation Zero.

Blessedly this is a reality we see daily as we work with those families

to cultivate their God-given gifts, help them achieve self-sufficiency and leave their present circumstances behind. So in this holy season, we renew our commitment to strengthen families and eradicate poverty in our diocese and offer our heartfelt thanks to all who make our work



possible (for more, see pages 4 and 5, and visit: **EradicatePoverty.org**).

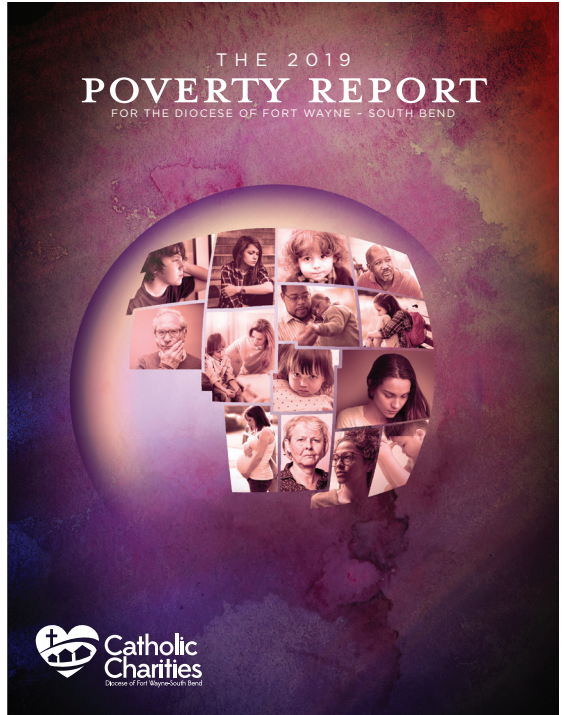


INTRODUCING THE 2019 POVERTY REPORT

THE HIDDEN STATISTICS ABOUT THE POOR IN OUR DIOCESE

With unemployment in our diocese at or below 3%, the economy is sound and we have much to be thankful for. But what about the 3% who are still unemployed? What circumstances prevent them from joining the workforce, leading more independent lives and achieving their potential?

We created the Poverty Report to shed light on some of the economic realities that these people face in trying to rise above their circumstances. Is it a lack of education? A lack of role models? Mental illness? Drug addiction? Medical issues? Whatever the case, as the human services arm of the Church, it is our role to understand their circumstances and provide services that help them achieve greater self-sufficiency.



.....
**FOR A FREE COPY
OF THE ENTIRE REPORT,
PLEASE VISIT
ERADICATEPOVERTY.ORG.**
.....

As the bishops of Indiana commented in their 2015 Poverty at the Crossroads report, "All disciples of Jesus Christ are called to love the poor as he did. As people of faith, we are invited to see the poor, to allow the Word of God to illuminate the reality of poverty, and to respond with transformed hearts.

Yet this compassionate response does not absolve us from asking hard questions. We believe it is essential that we make a prayerful, honest assessment of how we arrived at where we are today. If we truly are going to identify the causes and manifestations of poverty and create a pathway for positive, long-term and sustainable change, we must strengthen the foundations upon which individuals and families build economic stability and realize their hopes for the future."

Our Poverty Report seeks to answer some basic questions about how we "strengthen the foundations." On the opposite page, we highlight a portion of the content in our Poverty Report about the income needed to achieve self-sufficiency. For a free copy of the entire report, please visit **EradicatePoverty.org.**

THE SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARDS IN OUR DIOCESE

HOW MUCH INCOME IS ENOUGH?

Our low unemployment rate masks the reality that many jobs are minimum wage and, as a result, many workers have to work 130 hours per week to meet basic needs. So to begin any discussion of poverty in our diocese, we must first understand what constitutes self-sufficiency in each of the 14 counties we serve.

HOUSING AND CHILD CARE TYPICALLY ACCOUNT FOR ALMOST HALF OF THE BUDGET.



ST. JOSEPH COUNTY

- HOUSING - \$778
- CHILD CARE - \$1,076
- FOOD - \$520
- TRANSPORTATION \$247
- HEALTH CARE \$484
- MISCELLANEOUS \$310
- EMERGENCY FUND \$138
- TAXES \$741

THE HOURLY WAGE FOR A SINGLE PARENT WITH ONE PRESCHOOLER & ONE SCHOOL AGE CHILD TO BE SELF-SUFFICIENT BY COUNTY



..... CAROLINE'S STORY

CATHOLIC COUNSELOR HELPS FAMILY OVERCOME CONFLICT

"We are all benefiting," Caroline says, reflecting on her family's experience with Catholic Charities' counseling service.

Caroline [not her real name] lives with her husband, son, daughter and mother—a mix of generations that sometimes produces friction in her household. In the midst of this family dynamic, her son in particular was displaying some anger issues, especially toward his younger sister.

Caroline found a solution when the Catholic school her children attend sent a letter home about the availability of anger-management counseling from Catholic Charities.

She jumped at the opportunity. Before enrolling her 11-year-old son Dylan, Caroline wondered about the stigma that frequently attaches to mental health counseling. She hoped his previous experience with counseling would help him adjust to sessions at school.

"The stigma of mental health is still mixed, but we are changing that mentality every day in our schools.," says Karen Campbell, Mental Health Counselor at Catholic Charities.

Caroline enrolled their son and much to her relief, Dylan was receptive to the idea. In fact, he eventually requested that his 8-year-old sister Violet come as well.

"Dylan was very open about it, which was such a relief," Caroline says. "Best of all, it really seems to be helping."

The results have been impressive. In a place away from the classrooms, the kids have sessions together and individually with their counselor. Over the course of the semester, they have learned to better communicate with each other and their parents.

"Kids need structure," says Karen. "It establishes healthy boundaries so everyone knows what to expect."

She explains that forming new habits of behavior is much like physical exercise: with enough repetition of the correct sequence, the movements become less conscious and more reflexive.

Karen adds that the goal isn't necessarily to completely eliminate the negative behavior—such a standard would set unrealistic expectations. Rather, the goal is to greatly reduce the frequency of the behavior, which lets the counselor and student celebrate successes.

Catholic Charities always insists on parental involvement when counseling children. In this case, Dylan and Violet were reluctant at first to involve their mom. But then as their successes mounted, Dylan and Violet became eager to share their achievements with their mom.

Caroline would encourage other schools to bring on a Catholic Charities therapist.

"When things are better at home, they are also better at school," she says. "The sooner this happens, the better it is for everyone."



Hope to Healing

A MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES

The Hope to Healing Initiative was launched after we surveyed parish priests, Catholic schools personnel, and other community partners. We learned that their greatest request of Catholic Charities is for a trustworthy Catholic resource for professional counseling. We are uniquely qualified for this because we are the Church's human service arm and share the Catholic identity and values of our sister parishes and schools, and because we have been serving the emotional, physical, material, and spiritual needs of people in our diocese for nearly 100 years. Learn more at ccfwsb.org/hopetohealing.

INITIATIVE OBJECTIVES:

- 1** Provide trusted counseling for schools and parishes
- 2** Help clients navigate mental health system
- 3** Become diocesan resource for mental health

SCOPE OF NEED

160,317

Catholics in our diocese



20,000

will need help in their lifetime

13,668

students in Catholic school



1,640

will need help in their lifetime

18,000

served by Catholic Charities annually



2,160

will need help in their lifetime

B E T H E G I F T O F

HOPE

JOIN

Join the Hope to Healing committee in your county

VOLUNTEER

Offer your time and talent

PLEDGE

Make a pledge

HOST

Host a Hope to Healing event

www.ccfwsb.org/hopetohealing

LAILA'S STORY

HER EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY TO CITIZENSHIP

"Laila's case is perhaps one of the most complicated and difficult our department ever managed," says Luz Ostrognai, Supervisor of the Catholic Charities Immigration Program.

When Laila was nine years old, an American couple traveled to Monrovia, Liberia, to adopt her through the Liberian legal system. Laila, who was then called by her birth name, flew with her new parents to the United States to settle into her new home.

As required by law, her adoptive parents applied for Laila's Legal Permanent Residency in the United States. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) approved their request, and Laila received her green card.

Although the adoptive parents had completed Liberia's formal adoption process, they did not file an adoption petition in the United States. Had her parents done so, Laila would have met the USCIS requirements to become a U.S. citizen at age nine.

According to Laila, the fact that she was not legally adopted by her parents in the U.S. prevented her from attending public schools. As a result, Laila reports her mother decided to homeschool her instead.

Feeling neglected and abused by her adoptive parents, Laila chose to run away at age 15. At first, she slept on friends' couches, but soon became homeless. Even so, Laila reports living on the streets provided a stronger sense of security than living at home.

Laila recalled her adoptive mother once showing her a blue U.S. passport and some other official papers. Before running away, Laila says she convinced her mother to give her copies of at least a few of those documents. But, what little proof of citizenship the teenager possessed when she left home was stolen during her three years on the streets.

At 17, Laila arrived in Fort Wayne, still homeless and now pregnant. A local homeless shelter referred her to Vincent Village for additional support and services. Mercifully, Laila chose life for her daughter who turned three this past October. After learning about her precarious legal status, a Vincent Village case manager referred now-18-year-old Laila and her child to the Catholic Charities' Immigration Program.

.....
"THANK YOU FOR
NOT GIVING UP
ON ME!"
.....

Luz began searching for evidence of the single mother's citizenship immediately and suggested that Laila contact her adoptive mother to request her official documents. While Laila's adoptive mother followed through, Luz received only barely legible photocopies of the original documents from Liberia, and Laila's U.S. green card.

Luz verified with the U.S. State Department that Laila was not a U.S. citizen. However, even under Laila's alleged circumstances of abuse and neglect, USCIS required original documents and could not accept photocopies.

Because Catholic Charities of Fort Wayne-South Bend is a member of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC), Luz called on the organization for advice. Attorneys at CLINIC searched official records both in the U.S. and Liberia, and concluded that it was unlikely that Laila was eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship.

Regardless, Luz persisted. Twice she submitted Laila's application for citizenship to USCIS. Both applications were rejected. Over time, Laila's seemingly impossible case weighed heavily upon Luz. One day, Laila told Luz, "thank you for not giving up on me!"

Those eight words burned into Luz's heart. She thought, "If I don't help Laila, nobody else will." From that moment, the immigration supervisor redoubled her efforts. She often prayed, "God, guide me on what to do here!"

Finally, Luz received an email from a USCIS supervisor in Indianapolis with suggestions on how to proceed. The email offered no promises, no guarantees, just hope!

Armed with those suggestions, Luz sent Laila's citizenship application to USCIS a third time. Fortunately, this time officials in Indianapolis set an appointment for the young mother's interview with an immigration officer.

Luz sat in on the unusually long session with Laila. At the end, the USCIS officer informed Laila that her application required further review. He could not commit to recommending her for citizenship. However, a sense of cautious optimism filled Luz on the drive back to Fort Wayne.

About four weeks after the appointment in Indianapolis, Luz received an official letter from USCIS. The letter stated, "On November 30, 2018, at 11 a.m. Laila will be sworn in as U.S. citizen in South Bend's Federal Building." Luz's many prayers had been answered.

Today, Laila and her daughter are U.S. citizens. They have moved from a Vincent Village one-bedroom apartment into a two-story house. Also, as a U.S. citizen, Laila received the privilege of seeking employment and began classes to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). Upon completion, she will sit for Indiana's CNA licensing exam.

After Laila's citizenship swearing-in ceremony, friends, employees, and volunteers from Catholic Charities, Vincent Village, and Safe Families encircled the new U.S. citizen, and celebrated Laila's courage, tenacity, and the non-profit agency partnerships that made it all possible.



ROSEMARY'S STORY

HOW ONE VOLUNTEER OVERCAME HER GRIEF BY HELPING OTHERS

"I'm over the moon when my students are sworn in as our country's newest citizens," says volunteer Rosemary Travis, PhD, 72.

Rosemary works in Catholic Charities' tutoring program for immigrants who are preparing for their interviews with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Officers in Indianapolis. Candidates for U.S. citizenship face rigorous requirements for becoming a citizen, including: strict criminal background checks, legal permanent residence for the requisite period of time, knowledge of U.S. civics and history, and the ability to read, write, speak and understand English.

"I love being part of their little successes," she says. "And, what I do here is grounded in my Catholic faith and my love of country."

Rosemary, a Secular Franciscan in the Holy Family Fraternity and an Associate of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, views every job she has ever held as a ministry.

"Inviting each immigrant to take the next step forward, and the next and the next is my passion," she says. "It's what I am called to do. It's simple: it's gospel living!"

Well into her third year of teaching Catholic Charities' eight-week immigration classes, Rosemary finds volunteering gives meaning to her life. After her husband of 43 years died suddenly in 2014, Travis struggled to find a reason to get up each morning.

"For 18 months, all I felt was numb," she says.

As lover of history, Rosemary first ventured into volunteering at the Allen County Public Library's Lincoln Collection.

"I transcribed letters written to President Lincoln. Eighteenth-century cursive

.....

**"FIGURE OUT
WHAT YOU LOVE DOING
AND GO DO IT."**

.....

handwriting can be mind-bending and eye-blurring," she explains. "But despite its academic fulfillment, there was still a hole in my heart that nothing could fill."



6 WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Her family and friends let her tell stories about her much-loved, much-missed Will. They also suggested other activities she might explore. That prompted Rosemary to contact Luz Ostrognai, Catholic Charities Immigration Supervisor/DOJ Accredited Representative.

“Once I began tutoring immigrants here, I could actually feel that hole in my heart begin to mend.”

Now Rosemary’s attention is focused on the obstacles students face as they pursue U.S. citizenship. To overcome such difficulties, she frequently works one on one with students to help them master the finer points on the citizenship test.

Asked if she has advice for others who might want to volunteer, Rosemary says: “Figure out what you love doing and go do it.”

Make 2020 the year of dedicating your time to those in need. For more information on volunteer opportunities with Catholic Charities, please visit ccfwsb.org/volunteer or call your local office.

- 1 Help us grow our services through a donation
- 2 Volunteer your time
- 3 Coordinate a food, hygiene, book, diaper or cleaning supply drive
- 4 Become a Parish Champion to represent the needs of your parish
- 5 Host a Hope to Healing Initiative event
- 6 Organize a free mental health workshop with our clinical experts

For more ways to serve those most in need, visit :
CCFWSB.ORG/VOLUNTEER

THANKS TO YOUR
GENEROUS GIFTS

WE WERE ABLE TO SERVE
17,077 FAMILIES
IN 2019.

PLEASE CONSIDER A GIFT OF:

- \$1,500 Counseling Couples to Save Their Marriage
- \$1,000 Counseling Victims of Abuse or Trauma
- \$500 Welcoming New Americans
- \$250 Providing Job Training for Low Income Parents
- \$100 Preventing Teens from Dropping Out of High School
- \$50 Eliminating the Barriers that Contribute to Poverty
- \$15 Helping a Low income Family keep the Heat on

ANY GIFT, BIG OR SMALL, HELPS US STRENGTHEN FAMILIES!

Reminder: Giving Tuesday will take place on December 3, 2019.

#GIVINGTUESDAY



**Catholic
Charities**

Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

P.O. Box 10630 | Fort Wayne, IN 46853
ccfwsb.org



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Fort Wayne,
Indiana
Permit No.899