



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

March 2019

Dear Friends in Christ,

Lent is the Church's great spiritual renewal. Characterized by prayer, fasting and almsgiving, it is a call to conversion and a time to refocus on the call to love our neighbor. We need not look far to see the suffering of those in our local communities, but we must also remember those who suffer throughout the world. As we encounter the suffering of others we draw closer to Christ, seeking His face in the poor and marginalized, the isolated and lonely, and sharing His healing love with them. Seeing others through the gaze of Christ, we begin to recognize our neighbor and stranger as our brother or sister in the human family.

The annual CRS Rice Bowl campaign is Catholic Relief Services' Lenten faith-in-action program. Through CRS Rice Bowl, we hear stories from our brothers and sisters in need, and devote our Lenten prayers, fasting and gifts to changing the lives of the poor globally and in our own backyard. In prayer, we encounter Christ; through fasting, we confront our own obstacles and experience in a small way how it feels to go without; and through almsgiving we ask what we can give up so that others might have life to the fullest.

Last year, because of your Lenten sacrifices and those of Catholics around the world, CRS Rice Bowl raised close to six million dollars. Approximately two million dollars was retained by dioceses in the United States to help alleviate hunger and poverty locally. The funds in our diocese were used to support programs such as Dégagé Ministries' Wellness Food Program, St. Alphonsus' Food Pantry Project, Community Food Club of Grand Rapids' Local Produce Expansion and St. Ann's Senior Services in Baldwin.

I encourage you to take part in the CRS Rice Bowl program this year. Practical resources to help your family experience a profoundly rich Lent include devotions and prayers, simple recipes, a CRS Rice Bowl app, and the signature CRS Rice Bowl box for your home where you can collect loose change and bills.

As we journey through the 40 days of Lent, may we see the face of Christ in others and let Christ's love shine forth in word and deed. Thank you for your Lenten sacrifices which allow CRS Rice Bowl to be successful. To access resources online, go to crsricebowl.org.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids