



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

February 2018

My dear friends in Christ,

Lent is a time of conversion and encounter. During this time, we focus on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving as we prepare our hearts to commemorate Christ's death and resurrection. Throughout His time on earth Christ encountered many people and in each instance He showed us how to love one another and treat people with compassion. Today our world is bustling, always "on" and always "connected." We fail to truly encounter those around us. Let us take time this Lent to ask "who is my neighbor?"

This Lent, Catholic Relief Services' (CRS) Rice Bowl program can help us answer that question. We are invited to reflect on how we are all neighbors, both near and far. How can we help those who are hungry and poor in our community and across the world?

Through our Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving we encounter Christ in the many faces of our neighbors. And after the 40 days of Lent, we will be prepared to encounter the risen Christ who encourages us to see His face, especially in the poor.

Each year, CRS Rice Bowl raises nearly \$6 million for Catholic Relief Services with an estimated \$2 million of that total retained by dioceses in the United States to help alleviate hunger and poverty at the local level. Last year, our diocese used funds to support efforts such as Caritas Food Pantry, an outreach of St. Mary Parish in Custer and St. Alphonsus' Food Pantry in Grand Rapids.

CRS Rice Bowl brings Lent spiritually to life for families, parishes, and schools, while connecting Catholics in our diocese with our brothers and sisters around the world. Through Lenten prayers and devotions, reflections, and simple Lenten meal ideas that connect us with our neighbors, CRS Rice Bowl helps to ensure a focused, fruitful Lent.

Together, let us take time during these 40 days to reflect on the needs of our brothers and sisters, encounter them, and let them know Christ's love through us. Thank you for your prayers and care of the poor. CRS Rice Bowl is successful each year because of your sacrifices. Additional resources may be found by visiting crsricebowl.org.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids