

Serving all regardless of background, faith, or circumstance.



Catholic Charities volunteers in Woodstock, Shenandoah County, help a local resident as she selects basic household and personal items.

Sharing the Love of God in a Gravel Parking Lot

IT'S A FRIGID BUT SUNNY WINTER morning, temperatures not quite getting out of the 20's. A large Catholic Charities truck rumbles into the gravel parking lot behind the St. John Bosco Thrift Store.

Here in the small, rural Shenandoah Valley town of Woodstock, the monthly Catholic Charities St. Lucy Project hygiene distribution event is about to begin. Volunteers unload the truck and set up tables.

And people are already lining up to receive much-needed basic household and personal items that they can't afford on their own.

The crew sets up quickly. Volunteer

Monica Pedagno, a parishioner at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, leads everyone in prayer, thanking God for the opportunity to be together.

Then, two at time, local residents approach the tables to receive items: toilet paper, shampoo, dishwashing liquid, baby diapers, wipes, and other toiletries. Some people hobble slowly with the aid of a cane, others struggle to hold on to an energetic child. All are grateful for the assistance, and for the friendly volunteers.

"What's up, Ellen?" says a volunteer, cheerfully greeting one woman who visits every month. They chat briefly.

Ellen is one of about 70 people who

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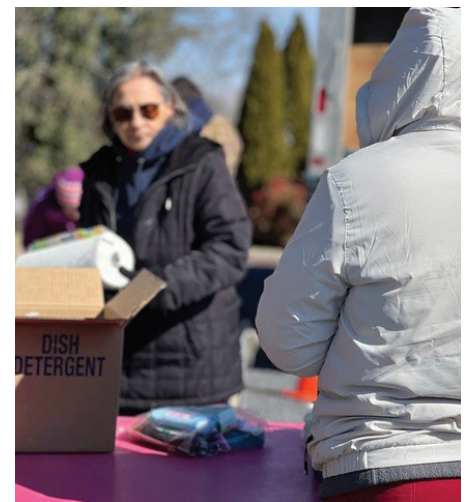
04 *Her car was stolen and totaled*

05 *"I have a new set of skills I can take with me."*

07 *"Helping is what we should be doing."*

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Without this ministry, some recipients would have to choose between purchasing food or toilet paper.

will be receiving necessities today. She's a resident of Shenandoah County, located in a long valley between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountains. This is a place where mountains replace the tall buildings of Arlington and Tysons,

→ *continued on page 2*

“The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all misery.”

-Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, Conclave, March 2013

Dear Friends in Christ,

Shortly after arriving in our diocese in 2021, I had the opportunity to accompany Catholic Charities' staff and volunteers as we distributed hygiene items—think laundry detergent, paper towels, hand soap, deodorant, and even toothpaste—to people residing in far western Virginia. I remember speaking with one recipient who shared with me that very often she would have to make difficult decisions for her and her family between purchasing food or toilet paper. She was incredibly grateful for the items she received that day.

Because of your continued prayers and financial generosity Catholic Charities is physically present in 20 locations throughout our diocese, providing direct care and assistance at each site. In addition, we also provide many of our ministries virtually, enabling us to serve anyone, anywhere. In fact, more than half of our counseling sessions are now conducted on-line, enabling people to access our care without incurring costly transportation and childcare expenses.

In this issue of *The Mission*, you will encounter stories of help and hope from 'the peripheries' both geographic and existential. We are blessed to walk alongside people who are suffering, and to offer them tangible assistance and compassionate care, wherever they may reside in the Diocese of Arlington.

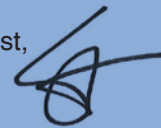
As we enter the great mystery of the Triduum, and contemplate the Passion of our Lord, Jesus Christ, let us pray for the courage to come out of ourselves and to bring the Good News of the Risen Christ to *anyone, anywhere* who needs us, and whom we can help.

Alleluia! He Is Risen!

Gratefully yours in Christ,



STEPHEN CARATTINI
President and CEO
Catholic Charities of the
Diocese of Arlington



Continued from front cover

Sharing the Love of God in a Gravel Parking Lot

literally on the peripheries of the diocese.

Clients like Ellen also get to select certain items, such as the brand of laundry detergent, or the size of personal items. “Diapers, size 7!” calls out a volunteer, and a package is quickly retrieved from the truck and placed on the table.

Some volunteers drive three hours round trip to assist with this monthly distribution. But all those who are served are local.

After an hour and a half, the line is gone. The volunteers clean up and head home... but they'll be back next month. †

Do you need help?

Catholic Charities delivers hygiene supplies in Woodstock once a month to Shenandoah County residents. Advance sign-up is required. If you know someone who needs items, have them contact the outreach coordinator at 540-692-0618 or outreach@sjtb.org to make an appointment.

Can you give help?

Make a monetary donation online at ccda.net/donate

An unrestricted gift allows us to use your gift where it's needed most.

To donate items, drop them off at Catholic Charities St. Lucy Food Project Warehouse, 8426 Kao Circle, Manassas, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., weekdays. Place in donation bins out front or contact 703-479-2975 ext. 103 for larger donations.

Items needed:

- Laundry detergent
- Shampoo (unscented, gender neutral)
- Deodorant (unscented, gender neutral)
- Multi-purpose household cleaners
- Toilet paper and paper towels
- 13-gallon trash bags
- Toothpaste and toothbrushes



A BIG Thanks!

Thanks to the students from
 Saint John Paul the Great High School,
 Queen of Apostles Catholic School, and
 All Saints Catholic School, for collecting food
 and preparing kits to help those in need!



Me & You

I celebrated a Nativity parish school Mass, and the gospel was the feeding of the five thousand. Seeing the large crowd, Jesus asks Philip, “Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?” Philip must have been on Jesus’ finance council because he responded, “Two hundred days’ wages worth would not be enough. There are five barley loaves and two small fish, but what good are these for so many?” Jesus took them, blessed them and gave them to the crowd. There was more than they could eat. Jesus would then teach them about another bread, the bread of life. *I am the bread of life. Whoever eats the bread will live forever.*

In my homily, I asked the children, “What are some of the things that people in the world do not have enough of?” They answered: food, clean water, shelter, clothes, and medicine for the elderly. Then one little girl in kindergarten raised her hand. I called on her and she answered, “ME!” I asked her, *ME?* And she said, “Yes, my grandmother says she can’t get enough of me!” How precious. What a beautiful way for her grandmother to express love.

I think God loves us in just that same way as that grandmother expressed. He cannot get enough of us. He became one *of us* and one *with us*. He gave us the Eucharist to feed us with the bread of life. A new bread. An everlasting bread. He keeps coming to us again and again and again in the sacraments. He also comes to us in the poor. We see the face of Christ in our brothers and sisters. *I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me drink.* In our support and ministries of Catholic Charities, we encounter the love of God, a God who can’t get enough of me and you.



Magn. Bob Cilinski

MONSIGNOR ROBERT CILINSKI
 Episcopal Vicar for
 Charitable Works



Our Emergency Assistance ministry helps neighbors with critical needs.

Catholic Charities Answers a Call for Help

MRS. LEWIS WAS JUST GETTING by. Single, she worked full-time as a site supervisor at a childcare center in Woodbridge, earning \$22 an hour. Back at home in Arlington, she was raising her grandson. Then trouble hit, and the cascading events put her family in a financial crisis.

Teenagers stole the car she needed to make the 50-mile roundtrip commute to her job. The teens crashed the car into an apartment building and totaled the car. Without a way to get to her job, she missed a lot of time at work – so she lost income. Compounding

the problem: Mrs. Lewis still had to pay off the loan on her now totaled car. Without income, she fell behind on her car payments and the loan was sent to a collections agency.

Mrs. Lewis quickly fell behind on her rent and her utilities. She turned to Catholic Charities which comes to the aid of neighbors in need throughout the Diocese of Arlington.

Catholic Charities paid the \$1,000 in past rent due to her landlord, and a \$98 utility bill. They referred her to a partner agency, which helps adults

in similar situations, and also to a budgeting class to help her to balance her income and expenses.

Meanwhile, a friend has loaned Mrs. Lewis a car until she can purchase her own vehicle. She's looking for a new position to cut down on her commute time, and she's pursuing retribution in court for lost income due to the car theft. She's getting by again, thanks to the generosity of a friend and parishioners and others who support Catholic Charities so it can come to the aid of a neighbor in need. †



About Emergency Assistance

Catholic Charities Emergency Assistance ministry serves individuals and families within the Diocese of Arlington experiencing emergency financial needs and have received a late rent or utility cutoff notice, or are in need of essential car repairs. To learn more visit ccda.net/need-help/rent,-utility-assistance,-and-basic-household-needs/ or scan the QR code.



Catholic Charities Encourages Young Mom to Recognize Gifts, Thrive

“I have a new set of skills that I can take with me that’ll allow me to be prepared for whatever may come my way.” – “Q”



“**Q** WAS IN A BAD PLACE. HER MOTHER HAD RECENTLY passed away. She lost her home and she needed a second chance. The 29-year-old pregnant mother of three found temporary relief at an area homeless shelter.

Q followed the rules of the shelter. She worked, took classes to get her closer to her goal of attaining a nursing degree, and completed all chores assigned to her. Her consistent and exemplary behavior caught the attention of a shelter employee who knew about Catholic Charities St. Margaret of Cortona housing ministry for pregnant women and mothers with children.

The shelter employee saw something special in Q: determination, a positive attitude and the will to work for a better life for herself and her children. She helped Q apply to St. Margaret of Cortona’s residency program, which provides a safe and comfortable place for families, and the tools to thrive in this world.

Q had been working since 15 and had her first child at 16. “I’ve always made a way to provide a roof over our heads,” she wrote on her application. “I am currently working full time and attending school for nursing. Nursing can be difficult to complete while working full time. Although it’s attainable, it is very much difficult. This opportunity will allow me to complete my schooling while also not having to worry about keeping a roof over my children’s heads.”

Q was accepted into the program and, with her children, left the homeless shelter for a new, fully furnished Catholic Charities apartment.

“When I walked in here, I thought, this has got to be too good to be true. We didn’t have anything. We just had clothes. And when we walked in it was like, a couch, TV, TV stand, dining room table, brand new set of forks and knives. A coffee maker! You have literally all of the essentials here, a washer and dryer. A shower curtain! You walk in and everything is here.”

Catholic Charities provided Q with a resident case manager, life-skills classes, employment coaching, financial planning, and family therapy for Q and her children. Staff helped Q identify her goals and held her accountable if she veered off track. She now describes her time at St. Margaret of Cortona as a time of evolution. She learned to see the gifts and talents God had given her.

“I started in one place and it’s almost like everyone here just kind of pulled out (of me) what was already inside. Either I was just too scared to do it, or I just had so much self-doubt. They give you the encouragement, but they also hold you accountable to say, hey, we need you to do this and it’s not for us, it’s for you.”

Now, she says, “I have a new set of skills that I can take with me that’ll allow me to be prepared for whatever may come my way.” †



The annual Catholic Charities Ball was held on February 7 at the Ritz-Carlton in Tysons Corner.

The sold-out event gathered more than 1,000 people together to celebrate the good works of Catholic Charities. A record breaking \$1.7 million was raised to support its ministries.

Last fiscal year, Catholic Charities was able to help more than 32,000 people, said President and CEO Stephen Carattini. A total of \$9.7 million in support was provided to those in need with \$3.6 million going to food, \$2.8 million to free medical assistance, almost \$1 million in emergency support, and \$2.4 million in refugee assistance.

At Catholic Charities Christ House in Alexandria, 19,877 meals were provided to feed the hungry. At Catholic Charities St. Margaret of Cortona Transitional and Maternal Housing, 70 women and children received housing and mental health counseling. Mothers were also provided with parenting, financial and employment classes. Almost 43,000 pounds of essential hygiene and household products were given to more than 6,600 individuals.

Bishop Burbidge said the Ball's theme of Hope aligned with the Jubilee Year's theme of "Pilgrims of Hope." He noted that whether a financial supporter of Catholic Charities or a recipient of its assistance, we all "look with hope to a better world where the love and mercy of Jesus Christ is made present to all people."



Scan to view photos from the Ball



Scan to view our video of help and hope



THANK YOU



"MAY THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH JOY AND PEACE"

SAVE THE DATE FOR NEXT YEAR'S BALL

Friday, February 6, 2026

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Meet **Roberta Ortwein**, a parishioner at Sacred Heart of Jesus in Winchester. She volunteers in the Catholic Charities Loaves and Fishes food pantry in Front Royal, where clients can select items from the shelves as in a grocery store. But the ministry also provides food for the soul...



I'm 73 years old, a wife and mother of 4, grandmother of 3. We moved to the area to be closer to our granddaughters. But I can't sit still. I've been in ministry work many years, as a catechist, youth minister, Director of Religious Education, and volunteer.

I couldn't imagine the Lord would say this is the end of your ministry. I drove through Front Royal, saw the pantry, and found my ministry.

At first, I volunteered 2 days a week. Then 3, then 4. Then I thought, why not go daily? I now volunteer about 30 hours a week.

We've seen a great increase in need since I started. We help over 100 clients a week, many of them new. Sometimes it's word of mouth, sometimes clients bring their neighbors or friends in need.

People are struggling. So even while people are working—landscapers, nurse's aides, construction workers—it's not enough to cover their needs. Many are upset that they need to rely on charity.

We hear the hard stuff: cancer, grandparents raising children, parents in jail, long-term illnesses. A few homeless walk in. There are times when you have a client that says they need your prayers, and begins to sob and hold on to you, and you

hear about them dealing with a scary medical situation, with no support at home.

Just having a place to speak those fears brings comfort to people.

Sometimes this is the only place they have to share their sorrows and concerns. I'm a hugger, so people get lots of hugs. Some get an extra hug because that's not always something everyone has access to.

We initiate relationships that build slowly, and over time people learn to trust us. I share comforting words that God is always with you. I remind them that they can come and chat, even if they're at a low point.

There is no separating faith from my life. Each day I rise and say, "Good morning, Lord, whatever you have for me today I am here." Jesus sets the tone for how to live. When you hug someone, or touch someone's hands, you are Christ hugging and touching them.

Jesus said the *poor will always be with you*. That's a blessing to us, and for those who can give. Helping is what we should be doing. It's doesn't need to be at the pantry. It can be sharing kindness, and compassion to other people. It's the small things in everyday life that can make the biggest impact. We don't know how the giving of ourselves will help others—and how others in turn help us.†

“*Helping is what we should be doing. It's doesn't need to be at the pantry. It can be sharing kindness, and compassion to other people. It's the small things in everyday life that can make the biggest impact.*”
— ROBERTA ORTWEIN,
VOLUNTEER



**Interested in
Volunteering?**

Our Front Royal food pantry is seeking compassionate volunteers who are ready to make an impact. Scan the QR code at right to see volunteer opportunities at Loaves and Fishes.

For a listing of all our volunteer opportunities, please visit volunteer.cdda.net.



WAYS *to* LOWER NEXT YEAR'S TAXES...

...OR PUT THIS YEAR'S REFUND TO GOOD USE!



MAIL

Send a check payable to Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington, to:

CCDA
PO Box 1900
Merrifield, VA 22116-1900



ONLINE

To donate online, visit ccda.net/donate or scan this QR code.

To make a recurring gift, when asked how often you'd like your gift to occur, select *Monthly*.



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A gift in your Will or Trust is one way you can leave your legacy of faith and service for future generations. Find out how at arlingtondiocese.planmylegacy.org

For specific questions, contact Samantha Donohue at samantha.donohue@arlingtondiocese.org



GIFTS OF STOCK

Visit ccda.net/donatestock to download the stock donation form. Email completed form to christine.farmer@arlingtondiocese.org



RETIREMENT GIVING

Lower your taxes by making a Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) from your IRA account. Provide this information to your broker today to lower your taxes and support your favorite charity: our Tax ID #is 54-0515706 and our address listed to the left.



EMPLOYER MATCH

To see if your employer will match your gift, visit ccda.net/match and use our online lookup. You may also check with your company's Human Resources department.



WORKPLACE GIVING

Our Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) number is 24770.

We also accept workplace giving donations through other programs. Check with your employer's Human Resources department.

Questions about donating? Email development@arlingtondiocese.org or call (703) 778-8600.



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