

Serving all regardless of background, faith, or circumstance.



Joyce says that the people at Christ House “helped me get my life back on track.”

The strength of Catholic Charities Christ House lies in the unwavering support of parishes, volunteers, and donors who believe in sustaining this daily work of mercy. Their commitment ensures that Christ House continues to be a beacon of hope in Old Town Alexandria, demonstrating the Church’s steadfast dedication to serving Christ in those most in need.

Forty Years of Serving an Evening Meal

FOR DECADES, Catholic Charities Christ House in Alexandria has stood as one of the most enduring symbols of compassion in the Diocese of Arlington. This year marks a remarkable milestone: Christ House has not missed a single evening meal in 40 years. Through storms, economic challenges, and global crises, the doors have opened every night—ensuring that anyone who arrives hungry is welcomed, fed, and treated with dignity.

The evening meal program, powered by dedicated volunteers and supported by parishes across the diocese, serves as both a lifeline and a place of community. Guests include individuals facing homelessness, families struggling to make ends meet, and neighbors experiencing unexpected financial hardship. For many, Christ House provides the only hot, nutritious meal they will receive that day.

Among those whose lives have been deeply touched by this ministry is Joyce, a guest who has been coming to the evening meal. Battling substance abuse and navigating long periods of instability, Joyce found refuge in the consistency and compassion Christ House offered.

“This place gave me something steady when everything else in my life was falling apart,” she shared. “The people here helped me feel seen and supported. Coming every night gave me hope—something to look forward to—and helped me get my life back on track.” Her story reflects the quiet but profound impact that a daily meal, served with love, can have on someone seeking a path toward healing and stability.

During the winter months, the evening meals take on added urgency. As temperatures drop and those in crisis face greater vulnerability, Christ House becomes not only a source of nourishment but a refuge of warmth, safety, and human connection.

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“And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

—Luke 2:7

Dear Friends,

At Catholic Charities we often meet people who have been displaced. Displaced from their homes, their jobs, their families, their communities. Many times the people we encounter will share their stories of being turned away, of being made to feel unwelcome.

In this issue of *The Mission* you will meet Joyce, a woman who is welcomed with warmth and compassion each time she arrives at our evening meal service in Alexandria. For a few minutes each day, our guests receive not only the sustenance they need, but the love they deserve.

Throughout our diocese, Catholic Charities is here to share the love and consolation of Jesus with our

brothers and sisters, to ensure that they know that there is indeed a place for them. We are able to do so because of the extraordinary generosity of people *just like you*.

During this Christmas season please pray for the men, women and children entrusted to our care, and for our employees and volunteers who welcome them.

Yours in Christ,



STEPHEN CARATTINI
President and CEO

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington

Continued from front cover

Forty Years of Serving an Evening Meal

Christ House also houses the Clothing Closet, which offers free, seasonally appropriate clothing to anyone in need; and the transitional housing program, which provides shelter to men experiencing homelessness within a safe, structured environment where they can receive case management, spiritual support, and the stability needed to move toward independence.

Catholic Charities Christ House remains a reminder that love, offered consistently and generously, has the power to change lives—one evening meal at a time. †



Students from Paul VI High School stopped by the food warehouse in Manassas to sort food.

Thank you to all our volunteers!



Volunteers prepare for the yearly Retreat For Persons Facing Serious Illness.



Call for Volunteers!

To learn more about our volunteer opportunities and ways you can get involved, please scan the QR code, visit volunteer.cdda.net, or email Debra Beard at debra.beard@cdda.net.



SCAN ME

Inaugural Diocesan Week of Service Highlights Catholic Charities' Mission in Action



Bishop Burbidge and the Chancery staff helped to assemble backpacks filled with supplies and notes of encouragement for individuals transitioning from incarceration.

Volunteers visited the Senior Center to accompany older adults through activities and fellowship.

In November, the Diocese of Arlington joyfully marked the inaugural Week of Service, a new annual initiative inviting parish communities, ministries, and families to embody Christ's call to love through acts of charity. Rooted in the Holy Year spirit of *Pilgrims of Hope*, this first-ever diocesan-wide effort united Catholics across Northern Virginia in prayerful service to neighbors in need.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington played a central role, partnering with parishes to support vulnerable families and individuals through hands-on outreach.

At the food warehouse, parish groups helped sort and package thousands of pounds of food destined for pantries across the diocese, ensuring that families facing hunger received nutritious support. The Senior Center engaged volunteers to accompany older adults through activities, meals, and fellowship—reminding seniors that they are

cherished members of our diocesan family. Meanwhile, staff and volunteers at women's transitional housing worked together to prepare apartments, help with children's programs, and offer hospitality to mothers striving to build stable futures for their families.

Parishes partnered with Catholic Charities ministries by hosting food drives, organizing service projects, and praying for those who depend on the Church's outreach. This collaboration showcased the strength of a community united in faith and love.

The inaugural Week of Service reflects a renewed commitment to living the Gospel through concrete acts of mercy. By working together, the Diocese of Arlington demonstrates that when our parishes and ministries stand side by side, we bring hope to countless neighbors—and strengthen the bonds that make our diocesan family a light to the world. †



Workplace Giving

Every day, Catholic Charities brings transformational services, delivered with compassion, to meet the needs of every person who seeks our help, regardless of background, belief, or circumstance.

You can be a part of this transformation by making a pledge to Catholic Charities during this CFC campaign season.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington's CFC number is #24770

The CFC also allows:

- You to pledge volunteer hours to help Catholic Charities serve tens of thousands of clients each year; and
- Federal retirees to make a recurring donation by a deduction from their annuity.

Please remember to check "YES" to share your pledge information so we can keep you updated on the impact of your gift.

Thank you for your generous support of our work.



Mark Your Calendar for These Upcoming Events!

Dec. 31, 2025	Deadline for 2025 Charitable Contributions
Feb. 6, 2026	Catholic Charities Ball

This is Christ's House!

Back when I was ordained a deacon, my summer assignment was to be the acting director of Christ House in Alexandria. I lived there and learned first-hand about Catholic Charities' commitment to serving the homeless and poor through daily meals, shelter, a clothing thrift shop, and counseling.

Once, the doorbell rang at 2am in the morning. I got out of bed to answer. Standing at the door was a young man in his twenties who was homeless and hungry.

But he had obviously been drinking. I explained that one of the rules was that you must be sober to receive assistance, and I asked him to return later.

He said, "Who are you?" I said, "I am the director." He looked up at the sign over the door, and then looked at me and said, "This is not your house...this is Christ's House!"

I paused in a moment of silent realization and reflection – he had me!

I was reminded that it was Christ standing before me in the face of this young man. I told him, "Wait here." Then I fixed him a sandwich and gave him a soda and bag of chips to go. I told him to please return in the morning, when he was sober.

His words, "This is not your house...this is *Christ's House*," changed my response to him and has guided me in every assignment of my priesthood.

At Christmas we again celebrate the miracle of the birth of Christ. He was born in a stable to poor parents, and placed in a manger. He humbled Himself in becoming one of us and living among us. He teaches us to care for those who come to us in need.

It might be hard to see Christ in others but we can always be Christ to others. Our generous gifts to Catholic Charities this Christmas and our volunteer service in our homes, parishes and diocese, truly transforms them into "Christ's House."

Love and blessings,



Mgr. Bob Cilinski

MONSIGNOR ROBERT CILINSKI
Episcopal Vicar for Charitable Works



Bishop Michael F. Burbidge and
the Catholic Charities Ball leadership invite you to

United in Faith and Love



CATHOLIC CHARITIES BALL
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2026

6:00 pm at The Ritz-Carlton, Tysons Corner

SERVE THE POOR. PROTECT THE VULNERABLE. WELCOME THE NEWCOMER.

Gather with fellow Catholics and community members from across the diocese for a joyful winter evening celebrating the impactful work God has made possible through Catholic Charities ministries. Your generosity will help us extend compassion and support to those in need, sharing Christ's love in a meaningful way.



Register for the Ball
or for the Mingle & Mix at The Ritz,
a young adult celebration with dancing.

United in Charity



2025 Parish Christmas Collection

Give today!

To make your gift today, scan
the QR code or give online at

ccda.net/Christmas



Our Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) number is 24770.



Questions about donating?

Email development@arlingtondiocese.org or call (703) 778-8600.



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Join Our Online Community

