

# Season's true meaning is helping others

Are you ready for Christmas? Your answer may depend on whether we are speaking of the holiday or the holy day.

With so few days remaining until the celebration of Christ's birth, we should be poised to proclaim joyfully the good news to all the world. Unfortunately the season's commercial aspects can impose such consumer pressure on us that the message of Christ-with-us is obscured. Gift giving, a wonderful opportunity to express unity and reconciliation, becomes an extravagant chore.

Remembering the poor in our community is a meaningful Christmas tradition. The most Christ-like gift is to bring hope to the lives of the hopeless. Over the years, some 35,000 donors have enriched the celebration of Christ's birth with their generosity to the *Catholic Courier*/Social Ministry Christmas Appeal. As a result, individuals and families who turn to the diocesan agencies of social ministry receive a compassionate response to their request for assistance.

The items and services purchased with Christmas Appeal funds are not found in glossy holiday ads. Requests for emergency assistance hardly qualify as luxuries. Donations to the Christmas Appeal are used to pull a family or individual through a short-term financial crisis. Food and shelter head the "gift" list.

Some items, though not typical, are nevertheless critical needs. A few examples follow:

## An Advent Calendar of Prayers

### Sunday, December 20

Pray for the Christmas Appeal's focus. So many people in need are waiting for assistance.

### Monday, December 21

Pray for all who suffer mental anxiety and depression and wait for calm and peace in their lives.

### Tuesday, December 22

Pray for our brothers and sisters — living in the world's war-torn areas — who wait for safety and security.

### Wednesday, December 23

Pray for yourselves, waiting in cashier lines, wrapping gifts, and sending cards, that your preparations will bring joy and happiness to your families.

### Thursday, December 24

Pray for those waiting to adopt a child and for those mothers who have given a child to adoptive parents.

### Christmas Day

Pray that all may know the joy, peace, hope and love that is Christ-with-us.

### The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:

- To find the lost,
- To heal the broken
- To feed the hungry,
- To release the prisoner,
- To rebuild the nations,
- To bring peace among brothers,
- To make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman

Mr. G. is handicapped with a neuromuscular disease. His difficulty speaking is compounded by cracked dentures. He is not eligible for Medicaid, but his financial resources are so limited that he cannot afford to purchase new dentures.

Susan is 19, alone and pregnant. She is not yet under a doctor's care. The Christmas Appeal provided her with \$4 for multivitamins, and put her in touch with Birthright.

Regina is a retired widow who requested help to purchase adult and baby diapers. Her fixed income will not stretch enough to provide for herself and for the infant grandchild left in her care.

For the past three months, Anselm, who is 89, has been unable to use his bathroom sink or tub due to leaky plumbing. He has so little income that repairs are not affordable. A hot bath would be a wonderful gift.

A car accident left an elderly man and his wife with uninsured doctor and hospital bills that used up all their savings. Now he requires a number of prescriptions and they have no means to pay for them while they await Medicaid enrollment.

The L family must regularly seek assistance from the local food pantry. One family member has a milk intolerance. They need help to purchase a variety of substitute-milk products.

### What is the Christmas Appeal?

It is a cooperative effort of the *Catholic Courier* and diocesan Social Ministry to raise funds that will help people in desperate financial crises.

For 22 years, the appeal has enabled the Catholic community to help thousands of people in 12 counties to meet life's basic needs. Christmas Appeal funds have been there for them when no other sources of aid were available.

### Who benefits from the appeal?

Funding from the Christmas Appeal helps individuals and families in short-term crises. These are people who have no financial resources and are either awaiting or ineligible for assistance

through other sources.

They represent all ages, religions and races, and include the physically and developmentally disabled.

### How does it work?

The appeal consists of a series of articles in the *Catholic Courier* and a direct-mail solicitation of prior donors.

Appeal proceeds are allocated to the emergency funds of the following diocesan agencies: Catholic Family Center, 26.33 percent; Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry, 26.33 percent; Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry, 26.33 percent; Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation, 10 percent; and diocesan Urban Services, 11 percent.

## CATHOLIC COURIER SOCIAL MINISTRY Christmas A P P E A L

I want to help. Please use my donation to help a neighbor in need. Mail check (payable to "Christmas Appeal") and this coupon to:

Christmas Appeal  
c/o Social Ministry of the Diocese of Rochester  
1150 Buffalo Road  
Rochester, New York 14624

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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