

# Catholic Courier

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## AFRICAN Crises

### Rice Bowl monies vital to CRS work

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

Catholics who think their contributions to Operation Rice Bowl do little need to sit down and talk to Michael Frank.

Frank directs the project resource management office of Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishops' relief and development agency. As he sees it, all those pennies, nickels, quarters and dollars Catholics throw in their Operation Rice Bowl boxes each week during Lent makes a world of difference in how many people his agency can serve.

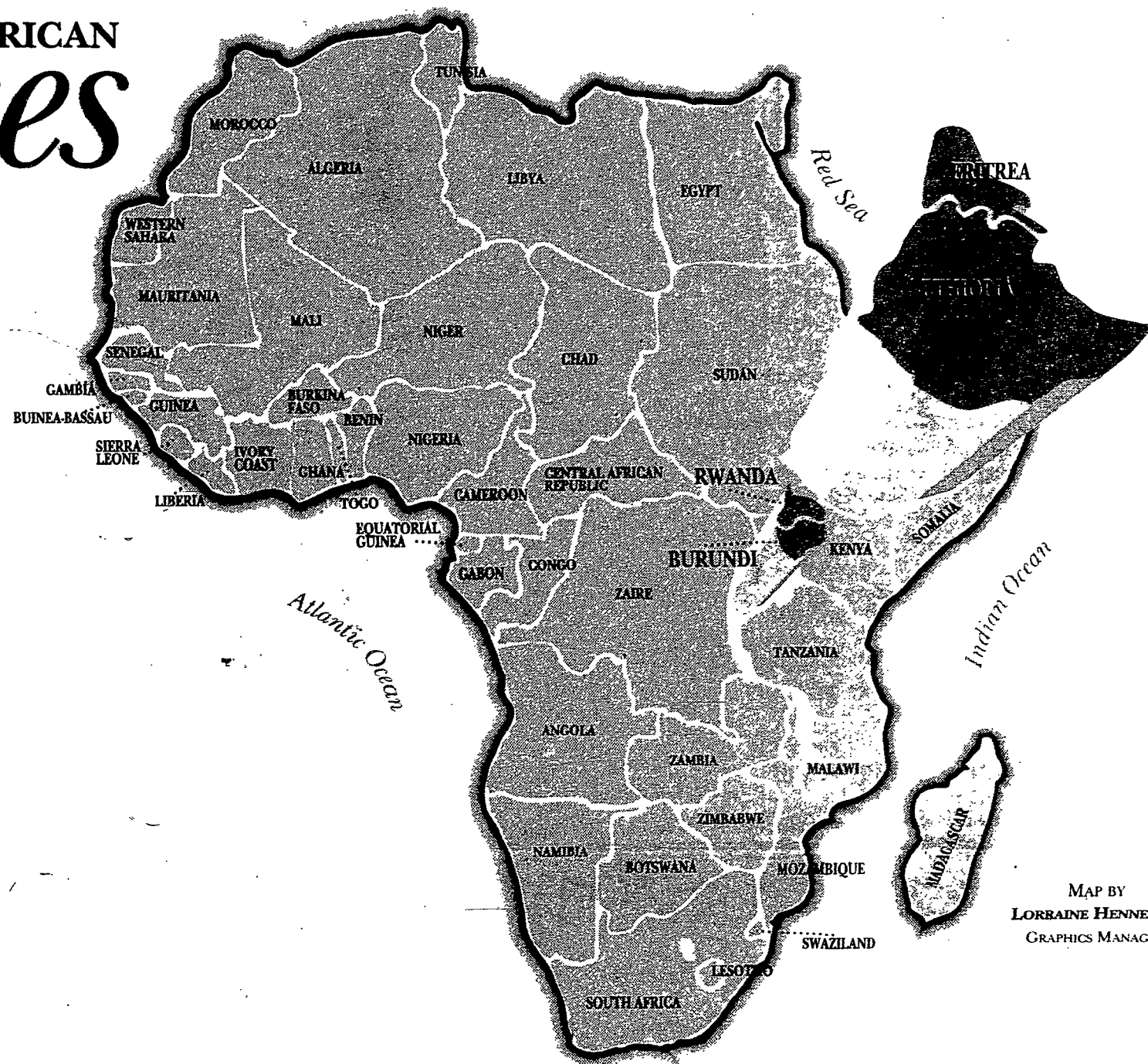
For example, he said, using a sum of \$5,000 taken from Catholic parishioners Lenten donations, CRS can persuade the U.S. government and private foundations to provide up to \$20,000 in matching grants, enabling the agency to give 50,000 women and children in a poor nation food, medical care and nutrition education. Foundation funds alone would only allow the agency to help one-tenth that number, he said, adding that Operation Rice Bowl monies are powerful negotiating tools in an era of tight budgets and cost-conscious politicians.

"We can tell the government, 'If you give us this, we're able to give you this,'" he said, adding that "people contribute to us because they know their contribution gets a double whammy."

Operation Rice Bowl spans six weeks during Lent, combining prayer, fasting, almsgiving and educational activities to raise Catholics' awareness of their connection to the world's poor.

About 75 parishes in the Rochester diocese are participating in Operation Rice Bowl this year, according to Judy Taylor, program coordinator. Seventy-five percent of the funds donated by diocesan Catholics goes to CRS, while the remaining 25 percent stays in the diocese for distribution to scores of social ministry programs.

More than \$19,000 in Operation Rice Bowl funds last year was distributed to such social ministry efforts as St. Martin's Soup Kitchen in Rochester; the Horseheads Food Pantry; and Auburn's St. Alphonsus Emergency Food Pantry.



MAP BY  
LORRAINE HENNESSEY  
GRAPHICS MANAGER

## Burundi could be another Rwanda, but Ethiopia, Eritrea see better days

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

Last weekend marked the U.S. bishops' Annual Overseas Appeal collection for most of this country's dioceses. Monies collected from U.S. Catholics go to fund, in part, Catholic Relief Services' efforts to provide emergency relief and development assistance in more than 75 countries.

Although CRS serves on almost every continent, outreach efforts in 32 African nations consume almost two-thirds of the agency's budget outlays. Such assistance goes to several different programs designed to strengthen and sustain the continent's inhabitants in some of the following ways:

- In Equatorial Guinea, CRS works with counterpart agencies to train and support local health monitors who



File photo  
An estimated 250,000 people fled ethnic violence in Rwanda last year to take refuge in Tanzania where these refugees walked towards a camp 10 miles southeast of Rusumo, the Tanzanian border point with Rwanda. Many continue to live in such camps.

operate rural clinics that treat people for such ailments as diarrhea and malaria.

- In Senegal, CRS helps farmers develop, own and operate seed banks that allow them to sell grain when it's plentiful, then buy it back at fair prices when food is scarce.

- In South Africa, CRS and local counterparts provide credit and training to Cape Town's slum residents so they can support themselves through street vending and other trades.

Although nearly all of Africa concerns CRS, it's the eastern and central African nations of Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, and Eritrea that highlight much of what frustrates and excites the agency's directors. When CRS looks at this region, the agency agonizes over its many calamities but also rejoices in a

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