

# WORLD & NATION

## Catholic Charities exec says needs will worsen

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Catholic Charities USA has laid out its vision of an economic stimulus and domestic relief initiative for the country following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"While much has changed since Sept. 11, many things remain the same," Sharon Daly, Catholic Charities USA's vice president for social policy, said Oct. 11 in testimony before the Senate Finance Committee's Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy.

Among needs she said remain the same and must be addressed, Daly listed the minimum wage, child-care assistance, affordable housing and health care for the uninsured.

"In fact, in many cases, these domestic needs will be exacerbated by the economic downturn that appears to be deepening since the Sept. 11 attacks," Daly said. "Low-wage workers — those who make at or just above the minimum wage — are the first to feel the impact of an economic downturn, and are the least able to withstand its effects. Accordingly, it is more important now than ever for Congress to take steps to aid the working poor."

While Census Bureau figures released in September showed the nation's poverty rate declining to 11.3 percent in 2000 — its lowest level since 1974 — requests for emergency food assistance nationwide, including at Catholic Charities agencies, were up 30 percent, mostly from the working poor, Daly said.

"According to our front-line caseworkers, the typical family coming to us for emergency food assistance is a parent

working at or even \$1 or \$2 above the minimum wage," she said.

"Each month, after paying rent, utilities and child care costs, and arranging transportation to and from her job — often far from where she lives — she has no money left to put food on the table. And that's a good month," Daly continued.

"If she gets sick, for example, and has unpaid medical bills, or loses time off work, she will get behind in the rent."

Daly said federal poverty guidelines, based on the premise that a family's primary expense is food, "are no longer an accurate measure of what a family needs to survive without assistance from government or private charities. Today's families spend the bulk of their income on housing and child care."

Without government action, she added, "the situation will only get worse." The principle of subsidiarity is an important component of Catholic social teaching, Daly testified, "but it does not mean that the federal government should cede responsibility for the poor."

Daly said Congress should pass the Strengthening Working Families Act, and touted the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments Act of 2001.

Among the former's provisions are:

- A "pass-through" allowing states to give child support payments directly to custodial parents and their children as a way to reduce the poverty rate for such households.

- Expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit for families with three or more children. An estimated 2.6 million children would be lifted out of poverty.



Karen Callaway/CNS

## One month later

Rose Stachon, Mary Mahony and Pat Bemish sing "God Bless America" at an interfaith vigil for peace, unity and harmony Oct. 11 at the Merrillville Town Hall in Indiana. Catholics, including the women from Our Lady of Consolation Parish, joined people of all faiths to mark one month since the terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

## Synod applauds Pope John Paul II on 23rd anniversary

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Members of the Synod of Bishops greeted Pope John Paul II with applause Oct. 16, the 23rd anniversary of his election as pontiff.

Acknowledging the greeting only with a wave, the pope took his place in the front of the synod hall for the customary opening prayer, which was followed by the singing of "Oremus Pro Pontifice" ("Let us pray for the pope").

Cardinal Bernard Agre of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, the session's president, gave a short speech marking the anniversary

and thanking the 81-year-old pope for his ministry, teaching, leadership and continuing foreign pastoral visits.

In every situation, he said, Pope John Paul is "a pilgrim of hope, a builder of dialogue and peace" and invites everyone "to experience God in work and in serenity."

The pope has held 1,008 general audiences with a total attendance of more than 16 million people.

The pope has made 95 foreign trips and has visited 128 different countries.



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