



DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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March 26, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has been the official overseas relief and development agency of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for more than 80 years. On the weekend of April 6th, our Diocese will take up the Catholic Relief Services Collection. Your support of this Collection, which provides emergency assistance to victims of war and natural disasters; assists migrants and refugees in other parts of the world who need housing, education, and specialized legal assistance; and supports travelers and others whose livelihoods require special pastoral support to access the sacraments, is as important as ever. In addition, CRS provides food to malnourished children in Kenya, seeds for families in Guatemala to plant their crops, and legal aid to religious, just to give you an idea of their incredible work. In Africa, many families walk miles to bring back contaminated water that sickens them and often kills their children. Thanks to your generosity, the people of Tanzania now have new wells and drink clean water from newly installed faucets in their villages.

Tragically, among the most vulnerable of migrants are the victims and survivors of human trafficking. Millions of men, women, and children worldwide are coerced into commercial sex activities, labor, and modern-day slavery – abuses which the Holy Father has called “a crime against humanity.” Indeed, this is an issue we face even here in south central Pennsylvania – a reality that prompted me to recently publish “*Setting Captives Free: A Pastoral Letter on Human Trafficking*,” highlighting the challenges many women, children, and men face in our communities. As part of its mission to proclaim Christ’s salvation and to restore and promote the dignity of all persons, the Church is called to combat human trafficking and to bring comfort and healing to its victims.

The Department of Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops carries out this mission through two anti-trafficking, anti-slavery programs. The *Become a Shepherd* program is a parish-based awareness campaign that educates lay and religious leaders to recognize human trafficking and combat it through public engagement and advocacy at the community level. The second initiative, COMPASS (Coalition of Organizations and Ministries Promoting the Abolition of Slavery at Sea), is a global effort in which international Catholic and non-Catholic partners coordinate to identify and assist victims of modern slavery encountered in the commercial fishing and seafood-processing industries.

The invaluable work to assist these victims of abuse and injustice is supported by funds received through the Catholic Relief Services Collection. Sadly, the vital humanitarian work of CRS has been impacted by recent decisions of our federal government to pause or terminate this work. While a review of existing humanitarian programs is normal, this pause is having real impacts on the people CRS supports. Your participation in this collection helps the Church in the United States to reveal Christ’s love around the world. Please prayerfully consider how you can support the collection this year. To learn more about the collection and the people who benefit, please visit www.usccb.org/catholic-relief.

Thank you for your generous support for The Catholic Relief Services Collection.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior
Bishop of Harrisburg