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March 8, 2025

Bishop Patrick's message to Saint Cloud Diocesan Faithful

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am writing to you with an urgent request. Prior to the beginning of Lent all parishes received materials from our Mission Office to promote our US Catholic Bishops' Rice Bowl campaign and the annual Catholic Relief Services/Bishops' Appeal. These have been our US Church's response to engage world-wide critical humanitarian needs for many years.

Today I am compelled to ask you for a deeper commitment. In doing so I join with my fellow Bishops and indeed our Holy Father in addressing the crisis created by the US Administration's recent and abrupt suspension and termination of lifesaving U.S. humanitarian assistance programs. CRS is a major participant in these programs.

These actions massively impact our Catholic Relief Services teams and partners across the world. These dedicated people representing us are witnessing the impacts in real time. As food distributions are halted, people are going hungry. Without treatment for acute malnutrition, children will die. Entire communities are at present without shelter and clean water. Farmers are unable to plant crops. Mothers and infants are going without health care. Sadly, the lives of our sisters and brothers in many areas hang in the balance.

Therefore, I ask that each of us respond as we are able. Please help us to utilize the remaining days of Lent with asking your beloved parishioners to prioritize sacrificial giving to these CRS programs to at least partially off-set the funding gap hampering CRS lifesaving services.

Secondly, kindly ask parishioners to consider joining our CRS leadership in reaching out to our congressional representatives, urging them to ask the Administration to halt and reverse all terminations of active foreign assistance programs that target the most vulnerable.

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CRS has recently reminded me that "The Catholic Church is among the most influential, credible, trusted and respected institutions around the world." I pray that the faithful of the Saint Cloud Diocese will continue to help us as the Church in America to live up to this image.

Yours in Christ,

+ Patrick M. Neary, C.S.C.

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Bishop, Diocese of Saint Cloud

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