

**REMARKS BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES GO FAR CAMPAIGN EVENT
CATHEDRAL OF ST. MATTHEW – WASHINGTON, D.C.
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Thank you, Megan, for your introduction. Thank you, Sean Callahan, for the invitation to be here, and to you and all the leaders of Catholic Relief Services for the tremendous work you do to spread the saving love of Christ to people in need.

Dear brothers and sisters, it is my privilege, as the Pope’s personal representative to the United States, to convey to you the spiritual closeness and the warm greetings of Pope Francis. You may recall the story that the Holy Father told shortly after he was elected Pope. (The 11th anniversary of his election is tomorrow!) He was in the conclave with the other Cardinals, and they had just reached the two-thirds majority of votes that guaranteed his election. A fellow Cardinal seated next to him embraced him and said, “Don’t forget the poor!” As Cardinal Bergoglio thought of the poor, he thought of Francis of Assisi. And this is one of the reasons he chose Francis as his name.¹ Clearly, service of the poor is the leading priority for the Holy Father. For this reason, he greatly appreciates what you all do to alleviate people’s suffering and bring hope, with the light of the Gospel, to so many people.

Throughout my 47 years of diplomatic service to the Holy See, I have seen CRS at work in several countries, including the places where I was Nuncio before coming to the United States: Haiti, Uganda, and Mexico. I have seen the challenges CRS tries to address, and I have witnessed the impact of its commitment to reach God’s most vulnerable children. Jesus not only calls us to feed and give drink to the hungry and thirsty, to welcome the stranger, to clothe the naked, and to care for and visit the sick and imprisoned; he makes these works of mercy the criteria on the basis of which our discipleship is judged. The reason for this is that when we serve people who are in need, we are serving Christ himself.² Collaborating with the work of CRS helps us learn to *see Christ* in the poor.

Among the great advantages of CRS is the way it works together with Caritas Internationalis, the local Churches, and other groups who collaborate with the Catholic Church in her mission. As a founding member of Caritas Internationalis, CRS belongs to a confederation of 162 Catholic organizations that work alongside people in poverty, bearing witness to the central place of the poor in the Church and society. This is important: not only working *for* people in need, but working *alongside* them. People in poverty are not merely the “objects” of our charity;

¹ Pope Francis, Address to Representatives of the Communications Media, 16 March 2013.

² Cf. *Matthew* 25:31-46.

they are *co-participants* in the work of the Kingdom. This is an important dimension of synodality. As Pope Francis said, “How I would like a Church which is poor and for the poor!”³

I am told that in 2023, CRS worked with more than 750 partners affiliated with the Catholic Church. CRS is well-equipped to work in a synodal way, since it has a long history of dialoguing with local bishops and ecclesial institutions and partnering with bishops’ conferences, religious congregations, Caritas agencies, Catholic hospitals and healthcare facilities, Catholic schools, and other bodies. CRS is both an instrument and a reflection of the universal Catholic Church.

On behalf of the Holy Father, I thank Catholic Relief Services for its work in showing the face of Christ’s mercy around the world. Special thanks to all of you who are here this evening, for the help that you extend to people and communities who are on the peripheries. I am profoundly grateful for the mission you fulfill in the Church, and I pray that God may continue to bless this mission.

³ Pope Francis *op. cit.*