

**Remarks – New Beginnings Luncheon**

**Chrysalis Ministries**

**May 11, 2017**

**I gratefully accept the St. Jude Thaddeus Community Service Award on behalf of all those in the Archdiocese of San Antonio who minister to the residents of jails, prisons, and detention centers as well as their families – and those who serve people who had been incarcerated and their families. Thank you.**

**Chrysalis Ministries is a wonderful example of what we can do together at an ecumenical and interfaith level to help our local communities struggling with so many complex and difficult issues. Standing for inclusion rather than exclusion, upholding the dignity of every person, reaching out to those who are or have been imprisoned and/or detained, upholding the basic religious values that have been the hallmarks (and at times our failures) of this great nation – these are noble, necessary, and vital responsibilities that we share. Strengthening what unites us -- rather than focusing on what may divide us – gives us hope and confidence for the future.**

**New Beginnings is a great description of the work that Chrysalis Ministries is doing regarding the issue of recidivism.**

Unfortunately, our current penal system is more focused on simply warehousing people rather than helping to rehabilitate them. Pope Francis has often spoken eloquently about this. He often visits prisons on his pastoral visits and acknowledges the innate human dignity of those who are incarcerated. He gives hope to those whose lives often seem to be hopeless, without a future. He calls them to conversion of their lives.

Our biblically-based belief is that every human person is created in the image and likeness of God – without exception. Every person needs to be treated with dignity and equal justice even if they have committed a terrible crime. Yes, they have to face the consequences of their actions, but they can also be led to repentance and conversion. Many can amend their lives and live a good, productive life in the community upon release. In this endeavor they need God’s help and ours!

Let us pledge today to continue our ministry and service to these sisters and brothers of ours – and their families!