

Good evening my sisters and brothers in Christ,

Tonight is truly a wonderful witness of your love for God expressed in your love and ministry to those who need your talents and your faith. I am always proud of the great and many accomplishments of Catholic Charities that are made possible by the work of our dedicated staff and volunteers.

Your volunteer service changes people's lives in ways, great and small. Sometimes, however, you may think that despite all that you have done, you still believe you don't make a difference. Let me just say that when you find yourself doubting the value of your efforts, I encourage you to believe that your mission is truly blessed by God. It is easier to serve when we see immediate evidence of your success, but it is truly an act of charity from your heart, when you continue to serve when you don't see the fruits of your labor.

It is love and mercy that keeps bringing you back, even when you see the same people, having the same conversation, and giving the same guidance. To you, your work may seem sometimes repetitive and not always exciting, but what you give is vital to the people you serve. I encourage you to never give up on those who need you most. Don't walk away from them. Jesus teaches us to never stop trusting in the guidance of the

Holy Spirit, knowing that He will give you His gifts when you need them to face challenges that lie before you each day.

At the canonization Mass of St. Therese of Calcutta, Pope Francis celebrated the love we share when we serve. “We are thus called to translate into concrete acts that which we invoke in prayer and profess in faith. There is no alternative to charity: those who put themselves at the service of others, even when they don’t know it, are those who love God...The task which the Lord gives us...is the *vocation to charity* in which each of Christ’s disciples puts his or her entire life at his service, so to grow each day in love.”

Now, let us join together in prayer.

Blessed are you, Lord, God of mercy, who through your Son gave us a marvelous example of charity and the great commandment of love for one another, Send down your blessings on these your servants, who so generously devote themselves to helping others. May we be filled with your peace and celebrate your abundance in the food we are about to receive. May the friendship we share be a source of your Grace and may you continue to shower our Catholic Charities’ volunteers with your blessings. Amen.