



Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon **OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

123 Nelson Rd
Saskatoon SK S7S 1H1
www.rcdos.ca

Phone: 306-242-1500
Fax: 306-244-6010
Toll free: 877-661-5005



December 15, 2021

Dear Pastors, PLDs, and Parishes,

The book of Proverbs 21:13 reminds us that “If you close your ear to the cry of the poor, you will cry out and not be heard.”

Over the last eight months, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon has witnessed parishes hearing and responding to the “cry of the poor” that can be heard in every one of our communities. Based on a parish survey, followed by a resource package for parishes in early 2021, we know that more communities are seeing higher rates of poverty, and more parishes are working within their communities to disrupt this injustice. In rural areas, parishes have connected with local agencies and others to reach out to their neighbours with dignity. Those living in rural areas can continue to assist by considering feeding a family in your community:

www.dscf.ca/christmasfoodbank/.

Saskatoon, like any community, faces its own unique challenges when it comes to disrupting poverty. We know that disrupting poverty consists of three significant categories being income, housing, and food.

On December 7, 2021, eight different agencies gathered with city parishes, Bishop Mark Hagemoen, and diocesan leadership to learn more about the needs of the unsheltered. Those present learned how parishes can respond by providing time, talent, and treasure supported by advocacy and education. You can find a link to these agency presentations: <https://youtu.be/go-MnFp6fow>.

In particular, the Office of Justice and Peace has received many requests from parishes, groups, and individuals asking how they can respond to what is currently a homelessness crisis in Saskatoon. This communication is the start of a journey to match generosity with basic human needs.

The first phase of response will involve offering city parishes the opportunity to be connected with some of the urgent practical needs that agencies are facing as we focus on working together on common ground for the common good. Some examples of this are financial aid, in-kind aid, need for volunteers, need for board members, need for staffing. The second phase, which is longer-term, is to continue to advocate for systemic changes, continuing education around poverty, and continuing to focus on healing relationships with those who are excluded. For rural parishes, we encourage you to

continue to respond locally to poverty that exists in your community. These two phases are rooted in our Catholic Social Teaching that calls us to act in charity, truth, and justice.

Saskatoon parishes, are invited to begin this Advent and upcoming Christmas season by connecting with these agencies and ministries. Each contact listed here has a ready list of immediate needs that individuals, parishes, and groups can consider donating, including the gift of time. Ideally, parishes can begin to consider supporting identified needs of a specific agency. This could evolve into a longer-term relationship with these agencies to work towards the common good together. Such partnerships would ensure that the basic needs of our most vulnerable brothers and sisters are met with increased reliability, consistency, and dignity.

Agencies and ministries with a ready list of specific needs:

- Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish: 306.653.4945
- Friendship Inn:
Volunteer: friendshipinn.ca/volunteer/
Donate: friendshipinn.ca/donations/
- Salvation Army: www.salvationarmysaskatoon.org/donate
To make regular contributions contact the executive director, Marc Cheriyan, Marc.Cheriyan@salvationarmy.ca
- The Bridge Saskatoon: www.thebridgesaskatoon.com/capital-campaign.html
- Saskatoon Housing Initiative Partnership: www.shipweb.ca/
Contact Priscilla Johnstone, pjohnstone@shipyx.ca
- Central Urban Métis Federation Inc: cumfiadmin@sasktel.net
- Meadow Green House for All Nations warmup location:
sarah.warman@servantpartners.org

If your parish is interested in exploring the possibility of offering a warmup location during cold weather for a couple of hours a week and would like to seek support as well as expertise, without any pressure of commitment, contact:

- Priscilla Johnstone, pjohnstone@shipyx.ca
- Marc Cheriyan, Marc.Cheriyan@salvationarmy.ca
- Kayleigh Lafontaine, executivedirector@elizabethfrysask.org

Housing is one of the three essential pillars required to disrupt poverty. Keeping someone in their home today is much more cost-effective than supporting them in a shelter tomorrow. If your parish would like to learn how you can be part of this solution for under \$1,000/year, please call Myron Rogal: 306.659.5841

While some of these agencies can begin to receive your support today, the diocese is ready to support your parish in discerning effective responses to poverty by considering such factors as location, experience, resources, and skills. Please contact Myron Rogal at 306.659.5841 or mrogal@rcdos.ca to find a way to match the good will in your parish with real needs.

To find out who is in need in your community you can utilize this form from the Catholic Foundation <https://form.jotform.com/213134482960252>

May this season of joyful anticipation lead to a transforming encounter with The Christ Child!

Sincerely in Christ,

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✠ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen