

Providing Help. Creating Hope.

Videoconference with Pope Francis



No one in any of the venues had been told that the pope would be receiving them virtually. "When I walked in, they told me the pope would be speaking from Rome," Ricardo said. "I didn't get that he would be speaking with me."

Ortiz came to ABC News' attention via Catholic Charities' St. Frances Cabrini Center for Immigrant Legal Assistance. Cabrini Center helped Ortiz obtain the immigration documents he needed to be able to work and seek higher education through a program that assists young people applying for administrative relief, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Application Assistance Services.

Immigrants in three U.S. cities experienced a first-ever virtual audience with Pope Francis, including Ricardo Ortiz, 19, of Houston, who was encouraged by the pontiff to keep courage, stay strong and remember the example of Christ.

In advance of the pope's visit to the U.S. in September, ABC News produced the live video conference, hosting it from The Vatican. The pope held audiences in Los Angeles, Chicago, and in Sacred Heart Catholic Church in McAllen, Texas, which last year had become a refugee center for thousands of children who had crossed the U.S. border unaccompanied by adults.

"When ABC asked for someone willing to tell their story, we knew Ricardo was a representative of the thousands of immigrant clients we see in our programs," said Cynthia Colbert, CEO of Catholic Charities. "He exemplifies their hopes and dreams, their strong work ethic and their deep desire to contribute to America's economy and society – and the legal limbo that impedes their success."

"Catholic Charities worked really hard on my behalf," Ricardo said.



Fall 2015

"I have nothing but good things to say about the people I've met there."

Ricardo, the oldest of four children, was born in Mexico. When he was four, his parents brought the family to the U.S. But at 16, he became the family's breadwinner after his father was injured. Ricardo eventually finished high school and was awarded a soccer scholarship. It was rescinded when it was learned he was undocumented.

The pope acknowledged how difficult it must have been for Ricardo to have "the responsibility of a father" at such a young age.

"On top of getting to meet the pope, I got to have a conversation with him, tell him my story, and get personal advice from the Holy Father," Ricardo said.

ABC News produced the event for its Friday, September 4, news show, 20/20. The segment is on its news site: tinyurl.com/ricardo-popefrancis

Join us on our #WalkWithFrancis

Dear Friends,

In September, I was very blessed to be on the South Lawn of the White House when President and Mrs. Obama welcomed Pope Francis to the United States. I also had the privilege of attending Mass to celebrate with so many Catholics and others of good will.

I share with you a powerful message from his homily:

"We don't want apathy to guide our lives. Or do we? We don't want the force of habit to rule our life. Or do we? So we ought to ask ourselves: What can we do to keep our heart from growing numb, becoming anesthetized? How do we make the joy of the Gospel increase and take deeper root in our lives?"

Jesus gives the answer. He said to his disciples then and he says it to us now: Go forth! Proclaim! The joy of the Gospel is something to be experienced, something to be known and lived only through giving it away, through giving ourselves away."

As I think about the work we accomplish together, indeed we have already taken the pledge to go forth. At Catholic Charities, we seek to be the ministry of hope and healing.

During the pope's visit, Catholic Charities all around the U.S. were encouraged to participate in a social media campaign: to post photos on Facebook and elsewhere showing people in acts of charity, and tagging those photos #WalkWithFrancis.

Our #WalkWithFrancis initiative was more than a social media experiment. We encouraged all our staff to learn more about social justice issues and take part in service projects outside their own work focus. Selfies were optional, as they weren't the point. The point was to walk outside our own comfort zones.

Even though the pope's visit has passed, we're still "walking." And we invite you to #WalkWithFrancis with us.

In coming months, we'll be creating more volunteer service opportunities for you to see how we put your generosity to work and to participate more fully with us as people of hope, helping people in need achieve self-sufficiency and live with dignity.

Let's continue to make a difference - together in unity, as one family.

In the peace of Christ,



Cynthia N. Colbert, MSW
President/CEO

MGCC hosts community at Open House

We want to express our gratitude to all of our community partners and friends who attended the Mamie George Community Center's Open House on September 24. The Open House featured Creative Aging: An Art Exhibition which will be on display at MGCC until November 13. Featuring an array of local artists, this exhibition displays the works of those who have actively chosen to be involved in the arts later in life. Artists include Dee Koch, Claire Payne, Lee Benner and Debi Beaugard as well an intriguing collection of art work created by numerous seniors who have been participating in the Creative Aging Program at the MGCC.



Terri Bieber, Creative Aging Director at MGCC and Ana Roman, Katy Contemporary Arts Museum (KCAM) Director and Curator

Food pantry opens in Galveston office

Catholic Charities has opened a small food pantry in its Galveston office. Still in its beginning stage, "our food pantry is beginning to take shape," said Elizabeth Kinard, Catholic Charities' Director of Community Services, Galveston-Bay Area. "We can now offer emergency food for those families in need, thanks to Galveston County Food Bank and the Bromberg Foundation," she said.

"Feeding the hungry is an act of mercy that we are all called to - not only at Catholic Charities, not only as Christians, but the entire human race."

You can help in that effort: The pantry is accepting donations of non-perishable, unexpired groceries.



The Galveston office is located at 4700 Broadway, in the Community Island Center. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. For more information, call 409-762-2062.

Besides food assistance, the Broadway location also provides information and referral services, financial help with rent and utility payments for qualifying residents.

Financial hours are 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., appointment only.

Lotus Project for Women Veterans in CBS documentary



On October 4, CBS News featured our Lotus Project for Women Veterans in a Faith and Culture documentary titled "Veterans Journey Home: Faith, Hope & War" which looked at challenges facing male and female vets as they transition to civilian life.



The Lotus Project focuses on female veterans unique needs, including mental health counseling and referrals, housing placement assistance, helping them access their VA benefits and helping them develop the skills they need to find civilian jobs and to keep their families strong.

The special, which interviewed Lotus Project program coordinator Olivia Bush and two clients, can be found on the CBS News site: tinyurl.com/lotus-cbs

Special Events

A Cardinal's Christmas

A Cardinal's Christmas luncheon
Saturday, December 12, 2015 • Lakeside Country Club
12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Time is running out to purchase your table or tickets to the seventh annual A Cardinal's Christmas luncheon with His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo. All proceeds benefit children and families in the care of Catholic Charities.

For more information, contact
Zarinah K. Poole, Director of Special Events
713-874-6649 or ZPoole@CatholicCharities.org



Will you Share Your Blessings with kids who might not otherwise receive a gift this Christmas?
Please consider:

- donating gifts for children aged infant to teen, or gift cards as stocking stuffers
- arrange a toy drive in your parish, or through your employer, or with family and friends

Volunteer to help sort and organize gifts by contacting
713-874-6645 or Volunteer@CatholicCharities.org

We are accepting gifts at our Midtown office
2900 Louisiana St., Houston, TX 77006

kNOW POVERTY



Toward the **Common Good**

January 28, 2016 • St. Thomas University

January is Poverty Awareness Month. In observance, we are hosting our second-annual kNOW Poverty summit, focused on finding answers and creating solutions.

For more information, contact Matt Johns,
Director of Mission Integration, at
MJohns@CatholicCharities.org or 713-874-6659
(Generously underwritten by CHI St. Luke's Health)



Mission of Love Gala

February 4, 2016 • Sugar Land Marriott

Honoring Rev. Drew Wood,
Pastor of St. Laurence Catholic Church

Benefiting Catholic Charities of Fort Bend County
For more information, contact Debbie Godfrey at
DGodfrey@CatholicCharities.org or 281-202-6220



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