Caring for Earth and for each other:

*Laudato Sí* and Catholic Charities

Protecting the gift of nature yields win-win for agency | page 10
This year marks the fifth anniversary of the publication of Laudato Si’, the encyclical on the care for our common home promulgated by Pope Francis. The pope, via the encyclical, has helped to increase the sense of urgency for protecting the environment that began with his predecessors. Pope Paul VI urged the world to address environmental problems both in his 1971 apostolic letter entitled Octogesima Adveniens and in a 1972 address at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (held in Stockholm). Pope John Paul II urged the world to respect nature in his 1990 World Day of Peace message, and Pope Benedict installed solar panels atop the Vatican’s Paul VI Audience Hall in 2008.

Central to the concern of these popes is the relational aspect of caring for the earth. In other words, they stressed that the relationships human beings have with God, with each other, and with creation are interconnected. Pope Francis, therefore, writes in Laudato Si’, “a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach” (No. 49; Italics in the original), with particular concern for those suffering in poverty, who also bear the greatest burden in terms of the negative consequences of climate change.

Catholic Charities as a ministry has recognized the link between taking care of the planet and caring for people in poverty. In this issue, the articles focus on a number of programs and initiatives from Catholic Charities agencies that demonstrate the social approach Pope Francis recommends in Laudato Si’. To introduce the articles, Dr. Bob Pennington, assistant professor of Religious and Pastoral Studies at Mount St. Joseph University, offers an explanation of the pastoral method that undergirds both the pope’s encyclical and the Catholic Charities programs (See page 6).

The Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, in his address to the USCCB General Assembly in November 2019, encouraged the Church in the U.S. to make a “greater effort” in implementing Laudato Si’. Each of us has a responsibility to do what we can to care for each other and creation (See Laudato Si’, No. 64), and not just individuals but organizations, too.

In the spirit of Laudato Si’, Catholic Charities USA has made a decision regarding this magazine, and I refer you to Sister Donna’s column to read about it. Going forward, in the words of Laudato Si’, may “we come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast” (No. 244).
AN INTRODUCTION TO
See-Judge-Act:
The foundational pastoral method of Laudato Sí

By Dr. Bob Pennington, Assistant Professor of Religious and Pastoral Studies, Mount St. Joseph University, Cincinnati, Ohio; Adjunct Professor, Lecturer Pastoral Theology, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, Boynton Beach, Fla.

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“Finding ways to serve our sisters and brothers as we care for our common home is a rewarding challenge for us all.”

- Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD
This year marks the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Sí*. Recently, I have had occasion to witness the work our Catholic Charities agencies have undertaken across the country to move toward renewable energy sources. You will see some of the projects highlighted in this edition of our magazine. Furthermore, I am delighted to share with you that CCUSA has reached an agreement with Constellation Energy to move our national office to 100% renewable energy, effective February 2020. While saving the planet, not saving money, was our primary goal, we are very pleased with this arrangement as it will actually result in cost savings. Additionally, CCUSA is moving toward a “plastic-free” work environment.

The many efforts undertaken by Catholic Charities across the country attest to our participation in the “exercise of charity” to which Pope Francis calls us. Finding ways to serve our sisters and brothers as we care for our common home is a rewarding challenge for us all.

Finally, in the spirit of conservation of Earth’s resources, we have made the decision to move toward digital publication of our quarterly magazine. This will be our final hardcopy edition. Upcoming issues will be available through our website and will be expanded to contain more interactive video content.

Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD
President & CEO
Five years have passed since Pope Francis released *Laudato Sí*, perhaps the most heralded piece of Catholic Social Teaching since *Rerum Novarum*. What is perhaps most intriguing about *Laudato Sí* is that it makes explicit Francis’ perspective on theological method and methodology.

Francis’ methodological preference is made clear when he states twice: “Realities are more important than ideas” (*Laudato Sí*, Nos. 110, 201) – a point he first made in *Evangelii Gaudium* (No. 231). In continuity with the methodological preferences of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI, Francis appropriates the See-Judge-Act method for theological reflection on, and interpretation of, reality (or the signs of the times, if you prefer), with the goal being transformative social action and justice.

The See-Judge-Act method was created by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, even though its roots can be found in Thomas Aquinas’ description of the intellectual virtue of prudence. Cardijn’s method was later developed by the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM) and liberation theologians, with recent advancements made by North American practical theologians.

In *Laudato Sí*, Francis describes the methodical practice he uses to construct his theological argument (No. 15). Francis says he begins by reviewing (“see”) the best scientific research today, then considers (“judge”) principles from Judeo-Christian
tradition. In light of his theological reflection, he will advance proposals for dialogue and action (“act”), both on an individual and global level. This three-step process represents a praxis-oriented methodology that prioritizes a critical assessment of reality (step 1) in order to change reality (step 3) through critical theological reflection as a mediating step (step 2). Francis’ justification for his use of this methodology is made explicit when he says, “Theological and philosophical reflections on the situation of humanity and the world can sound tiresome and abstract, unless they are grounded in a fresh analysis of our present situation, which is in many ways unprecedented in the history of humanity” (No. 17).

After this overview, Francis begins chapter one by engaging interpretations of scientific analysis in order to describe “what is happening to our common home.” Francis then moves to step two with a theological reflection on the “Gospel of Creation.” As he begins this process Francis reminds readers that dialogue between science and faith can produce fruitful dialogue (No. 62). Francis specifically argues that: “Given the complexity of the ecological crisis and its multiple causes, we need to realize that the solutions will not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality” (No. 63). He goes on to say that, “If we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it.” Francis adds, “A science which would offer solutions to the great issues would necessarily have to take into account the data generated by other fields of knowledge, including philosophy and
social ethics” (No. 110). This methodological approach is aligned with much of Catholic tradition, considering the Church has always been open to dialogue with philosophical thought (for example, Aquinas’ use of Aristotle). Yet, at the same time it advances beyond the limited approach of synthesizing faith and reason to include other social discourses such as sociology, anthropology, critical theory, and various scientific approaches.

Francis’ call for interdisciplinary research ought to bring together different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision. To be sure, toward the end of the document, Francis again appeals to an interdisciplinary approach to methodology when, in critical fashion, he states, “It cannot be maintained that empirical science provides a complete explanation of life. This would be to breach the limits imposed by its own methodology. If we reason only within the confines of empirical science, little room would be left for aesthetic sensibility, poetry, or even reason’s ability to grasp the ultimate meaning and purpose of things” (No. 199). Instead of such a limited methodological approach Francis claims that because “religious classics can prove meaningful in every age” they should be integrated in the pursuit of the understanding of humanitarian crises such as the ecological one that currently places a question mark over the future of life on the earth.

“If we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it.”

– Pope Francis (No. 110)
Protecting the gift of nature yields win-win for agency

The new solar field of Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Washington

By Msgr. John Enzler, President and CEO, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Washington
In the Archdiocese of Washington we were blessed to dedicate a new solar array on Oct. 17, 2019. Sister Donna Markham, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, joined us, as well as Archbishop Wilton Gregory, archbishop of the Archdiocese of Washington, and Mayor Muriel Bowser of Washington, D.C. All spoke glowingly of this effort to respond to Pope Francis and his encyclical *Laudato Sí*. I’d like to tell you how this came about as my hope is that you would feel inspired to find space in your diocese to create a solar field as well - and if not a field, a solar project on existing buildings.

We are lucky enough to have a 17-acre plot in northeast Washington, just about four miles from the Capitol. The site is the former headquarters of Catholic Charities and at one point was an orphanage for needy children called Saint Joseph’s Home. When Mother Teresa was spearheading an effort to take care of AIDS patients through a new venture in Washington, the Archdiocese encouraged Catholic Charities to provide a space in the former orphanage for the Missionaries of Charity and their ministry to those living with the disease.

We realized last year that the land was not being used to its full effect and looked into building affordable housing on part of the property. At that time, we were encouraged to think about a solar array rather than affordable housing due to politics and the bureaucratic process that would hinder our efforts. Our housing division for the Archdiocese, Victory Housing, suggested we speak with Catholic Climate Covenant and Solar Energy Services. They took the lead in bringing this project to completion.

Why did we say yes? First of all, we were very excited about responding directly to Pope Francis and the desire to be more environmentally friendly. The Seventh
Principle of Social Justice challenges us to be good stewards of our environment. This is our mission and a challenge to us all. Secondly, we realized that this was a very good financial decision. In broad numbers, we agreed on a 15-year contract that will bring us over $5 million in either income or energy exchanges over those years. We will pay no more electrical bills in the District of Columbia for our 14 buildings that provide direct services to the poor and vulnerable. Those savings will do two things: Help us maintain a very old building for the Missionaries of Charity by providing the funds to take care of all maintenance and capital expenses, and give us an additional quarter million dollars in savings to directly assist our programs that serve our clients every day.

We met with the neighbors for their input and received valuable suggestions on how to implement a five-acre solar array on our property. Improvements to the plan now include the planting of 100 trees, which will improve storm-water management, a pollinator field rather than gravel underneath the panels, and additional environmental efforts to enhance the aesthetic beauty of the project. As always, there were some concerns raised by the community, and we did our best to address them.

All is going well and we planned to have the project completed by the end of 2019.

Obviously, this is a win-win and that is why I want to encourage you to think carefully about your own properties and the potential to do the right thing while saving and providing money to help those in need. We are thrilled to be a partner with Catholic Energies and Catholic Climate Covenant in leading the way for our community. I’m particularly proud that Catholic Charities took a proactive step in making solar a part of our commitment to responding to the environmental needs of our society, not just for today, but for generations to come. We have a moral obligation to recycle. Our young people are clearly leading the way in this regard, and we hope to join in solidarity with them as they remind us in their words and actions of our responsibility to protect the great gift of nature that God has put in our hands.

If you want more information, I encourage you to contact Dan Misleh at Catholic Climate Covenant. He is very anxious to work with all who wish to pursue solar energy through their agency or parish. (See also Misleh’s article on page 20).
“I’m particularly proud that Catholic Charities took a proactive step in making solar a part of our commitment to responding to the environmental needs of our society, not just for today, but for generations to come.”

– Msgr. John Enzler
By David Werning

The Parish Social Ministry program at Catholic Charities Maine (CCM), in its effort to share and implement the teaching of Laudato Sí, transformed recycling old television sets into a way of educating people on caring for creation.

“We refer to it as the free ‘TV-drop-off’ day,” said Bill Wood, parish outreach specialist for CCM. “We also take computers, microwaves, basically, anything that plugs in.” The recycling day is called “E-waste,” and it is part of a diocesan-wide initiative called EcoJoy developed by the CCM Parish Social Ministry team.

According to the CCM website, EcoJoy “is a holistic approach integrating ecology, education, and spirituality in an effort of the Catholic Church to unify environmental efforts with our parishes.” EcoJoy consists of four cornerstone activities: spiritual integration, ongoing learning, community partnerships and sharing information and practices.

The E-waste recycling days combine all four activities into a gentle reminder of the messages of Laudato Sí, which seeks to ground the care for creation in the care and mutual concern of human beings with each other.
“We’ve done more than 15 recycling days at church locations,” Wood said, “and we partner with a recycling company. It’s pretty amazing, because in the span of three or four hours we collect thirty to forty thousand pounds of old electronics. It’s also a great way to make friends with the community and parishioners, who can get rid of their stuff without having to pay a fee at the local dump or transfer station. It’s just a great way to connect with the community around this topic.”

Michael Smith, program manager for CCM’s Parish Social Ministry program, said that some of the parishes take advantage of hosting an E-waste day by highlighting other activities friendly to the environment and community life. “One priest encouraged his parishioners to sign up for electronic bulletins,” Smith said, “and to make donations online and to develop efforts beyond recycling in order to reduce the footprint further.”

Money gained from the recycling days – not only from the recycled material but also from spontaneous donations – pays for more educational opportunities and activities focused on *Laudato Si*, everything from community gardens to art projects.

The “Care for Creation Art Project” – paid for by E-waste funds – introduces children to *Laudato Si* and challenges them to create a piece of art based on their learning. The children watch one of two animated videos (one for younger children https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1VulSZGdug; one for teens https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3Lz7dmn1eM), that introduce the concepts of *Laudato Si*. Then, with the...
supplies provided by E-waste, the children sculpt, paint or make something in response to what they have learned.

One child painted a sunset and included an explanatory note: “The meaning of my drawing...is that when the sun comes up everything has God’s light...We must protect God’s earth by not putting plastic in the ocean.” Another child drew a picture of the earth and stated: “I think we should focus on God’s creations more than your inside life. We should respect nature with our heart, soul, and life.”

The children’s responses to the _Laudato Sí_ videos encouraged Wood and made the effort to implement EcoJoy worthwhile. “All the children wrote really wonderful things,” he said. “I think they really got the message. We all come together and we make something that, as a whole, is representative of our universal faith.”

Both Wood and Smith agree that the EcoJoy program has been a success for CCM and their diocese. For that success to continue means getting more people involved and engaged in assimilating and implementing the teachings of _Laudato Sí_, which includes more than official programs and courses.

“We start more organically,” Smith said. “Where is the Spirit moving you? And we help engage you in that way to help the Spirit come alive. It’s about creating opportunities for taking care of God’s creation in ways that fit people’s lives. We’ve found that these kinds of encounters excite and impassion people to move on to more formal ministries.”

They are definitely getting the word out. On one of the recycling days, an older woman drove into the church parking lot and asked Wood to remove her old television from her car’s trunk. When he opened the lid, he found a very small TV set, the size of a laptop. But the woman wanted to give more and handed Wood a check for $100. Wood asked if she was sure, and the woman replied, “I like what you’re doing.”

“When the sun comes up everything has God’s light...We must protect God’s earth by not putting plastic in the ocean.”
After reading *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis’ encyclical on caring for the earth, Elizabeth Acevedo asked herself, “Where do I fit in?” It’s precisely the question Pope Francis wants the reader to ask: “All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.” (No. 14).

Acevedo manages the Catholic Charities food pantry in East Chicago, Indiana, which is in Lake County and the Diocese of Gary. She said that Pope Francis made her think about how she, from her place in the world, can implement the vision of *Laudato Si*.

It’s not just about the weather, Acevedo said. “With the resources that I have – which is the food – I’m a part of making a difference and making a change. Now I tell our donors and volunteers, we’re not only feeding people; we’re also saving the environment.”

According to Acevedo, every day in the United States 197 million pounds of edible food goes into landfills and begins to decay, emitting harmful toxins into the environment (See feedingamerica.org). She is determined to lower that number by getting food to people who are hungry. Her solution involves three main efforts: getting the word out, connecting to other programs in the community, and getting food to those who need it.

By David Werning
munity, and delivering food to people who cannot travel to the East Chicago pantry.

**Getting the word out**

Getting the word out means taking every opportunity to talk about the reality of people living in “food deserts,” areas that lack affordable and nutritious food options, such as grocery stores. “In the work that we’re doing, connecting with different people,” Acevedo said, “we find that there are little pockets of people who are in poverty in very well-off cities. People don’t know that.” Social media, articles, church bulletins and even casual conversations can help raise awareness. Acevedo said that she first learned about food deserts when talking with a friend. The conversation inspired her to get involved, and now she brings up the topic when an opportunity presents itself.

**Community connections**

Connecting to other programs in the community makes a big difference in getting food to people who need it and preventing waste. “We really have to have a sense of community,” Acevedo said, “intertwining with each other, knowing what each other’s programs are about and how we can help the situation.”

The Foodbank of Northwest Indiana, a large distribution center in Lake County, Indiana, partners with Acevedo and the Catholic Charities pantry. The pantry receives three categories of food from the Foodbank: United States Department of Agriculture food, which comes directly from the federal government; “menu order,” which is surplus food from a manufacturer; and “retail order,” which is “rescued” food from stores like Walmart, Target, Jewel or Sam’s Club.

“The Foodbank is rescuing all that food from going into a landfill,” Acevedo said. “And that food is coming to us, to our pantry here at Catholic Charities, to give out to people who are in need, who are hungry, who maybe lost a job and can’t feed their family at the moment.”
Carrying food to the people

Even with the best resources available to them, some people still cannot access affordable and nutritious food or get to the East Chicago pantry. The reasons include living in a rural area, lack of transportation, being homebound and tight work schedules that do not allow travel. Acevedo recognized the problem. “People can’t get to us,” Acevedo said, “so I need to get to them. And I thought how could I do it? That’s how I started the pop-up pantry and the mobile pantry.”

The pop-up pantry happens two times a month or “when I feel that God is leading me to it,” Acevedo said. She loads her car with 25 bags of groceries and cases of fruits or vegetables, and then she transports the food to different communities unannounced. Acevedo parks in front of municipal buildings, schools or parks, and gives bags to anyone who wants them.

The mobile pantry takes place four times a month, once every week at locations placed strategically in the north, south, east and west of Lake County. Acevedo brings 10 to 50 bags of groceries with her and distributes them at the same mobile sites every month.

Everything is connected

All the efforts Acevedo makes to feed people who are hungry and to prevent waste are grounded in the Catholic faith, which proclaims the dignity of each human being and the value of the earth. Her efforts also reflect the vision of Laudato Si: “Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society” (No. 91).

The people who encounter Acevedo may or may not have the pope’s encyclical in mind, but they know they are valued and welcomed. One young adult struggling with homelessness expressed as much on a recent trip to the pantry: “I feel like this is grandma’s house, because grandma is always home, she’s always welcoming you, and there’s always food to eat.”
A good portion of southeastern Australia was aflame in late 2019 through 2020. A normally hot country, the region has also suffered from a prolonged drought since 2017. And it was very windy. Drought, higher than average temperatures and unusually strong winds meant a perfect recipe for wildfires. By comparison, in 2018, the worst year on record, the California wildfires burned 1.9 million acres. Southern Australia lost over 12 million acres.

In 2017, Hurricane Harvey crossed Gulf of Mexico surface waters that were seven degrees warmer than average for August and went from a tropical depression to a category 4 hurricane in just two days. It lingered over Houston and surrounding towns dumping record amounts of precipitation, including nearly 65 inches in Nederland, Texas.

Stronger storms and more intense droughts are becoming the norm. Scientists tell us that climate change is exacerbating these natural and cyclical phenomena. As the atmosphere warms, more water evaporates, increasing the amount of moisture in the sky while at the same time drying out the land. Generally speaking, dryer places are getting dryer and wetter places are getting wetter.

But even if you didn’t take the scientists’ word for it, insurance companies certainly have noticed. Munich Re, the re-insurance giant, has charted worldwide extreme weather catastrophes since 1980. Excluding things like earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanos—which are not related to climate change—floods, wildfires, and stronger-than-average storms have increased more than 3-fold since 1980.

It’s not your imagination, there really are more disasters

By Dan Misleh, Founder and Executive Director, Catholic Climate Covenant
Catholic Charities agencies on the front lines of these weather-related disasters will attest to the fact that there is simply much more to respond to than there was just a decade or two ago.

Who suffers the most from these disasters? The poor and most vulnerable. In the U.S., they typically lack the means (money, a reliable car) to flee from the drought or storm as well as property insurance (like some renters), or support systems that they can rely on after the disaster has passed. Catholic Charities and other aid agencies stay to help long after the Red Cross and FEMA have done their work.

Pope Francis, in his landmark encyclical, *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*, notes that, “The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together...[b]oth everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest” (No. 48). In the U.S., we have systems and structures to help people cope with disasters. In poor countries, these disruptions are literally life and death.

Since its founding in 2006, Catholic Climate Covenant, an organization that partners with 19 national Catholic groups including Catholic Charities USA, has insisted that the Catholic approach to climate change is both caring for God’s good gift of creation and caring for those who are poor at home and abroad and most impacted by our neglect. The Catholic community should be concerned about all of creation. But we must especially allow our hearts to hear the cries of those who are poor. Our tradition goes back to Genesis, not just Earth Day.
As the evidence of human neglect of creation becomes more and more apparent, our faith mandates that we find ways to walk more gently on the earth and be more mindful of our impact on those who are poor.

In 2019, Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Washington found a wonderful way to do this. Working with the Covenant’s Catholic Energies program, they installed the largest ground-based solar system in the District of Columbia. (See article on page 10.) The 2-megawatt system reduces energy use among all Catholic Charities-owned buildings in the district by $250,000/year, money that can be used to shelter the homeless, feed the hungry and counsel the lost. The lease payments from the owner of the system are funding the costs of long-deferred maintenance on the building housing the sick and dying and the Missionaries of Charity sisters who care for them. This “win-win” thinking can help make the Catholic community a beacon for living more humbly with our God and serving God’s people with greater intention. What’s not to like? Lower emissions, utility bill savings diverted to core mission activities, a witness to the wider community, and an evangelization tool for young Catholics wanting their Church to respond to the climate crisis.

Our human consciousness allows us to reflect on this amazing universe and its Creator. Our faith demands us to respond as co-creators with God and become better caretakers of this precious gift, our Common Home.

“As the evidence of human neglect of creation becomes more and more apparent, our faith mandates that we find ways to walk more gently on the earth and be more mindful of our impact on those who are poor.” - Dan Misleh
Catholic Charities USA hosted the 11th annual Applied Institute for Disaster Excellence (AIDE) December 2-6, 2019, in Jacksonville, Fla. Sixty-two Catholic Charities agencies and 41 Catholic Charities partners from 27 states and two U.S. territories sent 251 participants to the institute. Partner organizations included St. Vincent de Paul, Lutheran Social Services, Catholic Mutual Group, Tzu Chi, International Orthodox Christian Charities, National VOAD, State and Federal Emergency Management departments and other nonprofit organizations active in disaster response efforts. Sixty-five percent of participants were first-time attendees.

AIDE trains staff from local Catholic Charities agencies in the provision of disaster services. Participants gain a greater understanding of how to initiate and sustain disaster services in their particular agency. They also receive excellent resources and form relationships with their peers facing similar situations. AIDE is recommended for all Catholic Charities personnel, including directors, programmatic staff, and other employees having a role in disaster or emergency situations.
Participate in the 2019 CCUSA Annual Survey

The 2019 CCUSA Annual Survey launched February 7! A preparation webinar took place on February 6. For a link to the webinar and all supporting materials contact Ashley Rininger, research analyst, (arininger@catholiccharitiesusa.org) or Kerry Glova (kglova@catholiccharitiesusa.org), director, Research and Evaluation. All submissions are due by May 1, 2020.

Charities USA is going digital

As announced in the president’s column of this issue, Charities USA henceforth will be published in a digital format. The content will still feature the amazing work of local Catholic Charities agencies and of the national office, but the magazine will come to you in a more environmentally friendly way.

Be sure to sign up for the digital version online or scan the QR code www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/digital-magazine-sign-up
Santa Clara University’s Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship has launched a special U.S.-focused accelerator designed to help organizations serving some of the most marginalized populations in the country develop more sustainable and scalable solutions.

Eighteen organizations were selected for Miller Center’s Pathways Out of Poverty (POP) Global Social Benefit Institute (GSBI®) Online accelerator, a six-month program providing practical tools, proven curriculum, and executive mentorship to help entrepreneurs scale their enterprises.

“Social entrepreneurship can be a lasting tool to solve problems of poverty, particularly in America where income disparity is increasing between the haves and have-nots,” said Thane Kreiner, Ph.D., executive director, Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship. “The inspiring enterprises selected to participate in the program are working to improve economic livelihoods and create a path toward self-sufficiency for underserved and vulnerable communities across the country.”

The POP program builds on Miller Center’s experience in accelerating more than 1,000 social enterprises in 100 countries, that have collectively improved, transformed or saved the lives of over 400 million people. The program is being offered in collaboration with Catholic Charities USA.

POP participants include Catholic Charities organizations and other enterprises that provide social services such as workforce readiness, training and jobs; housing; meals; interpretation services; and additional services to low-income and the homeless, including youth, women, the elderly, disabled people and individuals previously incarcerated. Of the 18 organizations, 12 are nonprofit, four are for-profit and two are a hybrid. Seven of the enterprises are run by women.
Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens celebrated a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Charles F. Murphy Early Childhood Development Center in Coney Island on November 8, 2019, to mark the opening of the state-of-the-art facility. The new building replaces the former Madeleine Jones Head Start Center, operated by Catholic Charities since 1979, which was destroyed by Hurricane Sandy.

Monsignor Alfred P. LoPinto, chief executive officer of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens, was joined by Charles F. Murphy, senior vice president, Turner Construction Company; Diane J. Savino, New York state senator, District 23; Mark Treyger, New York City council member, District 47; Mathylde Frontus, assembly member, District 46; Tim McManus, vice president of Catholic Charities Progress of Peoples Development; Desiree Jackson-Fryson, vice president of Catholic Charities Early Childhood Services; and other distinguished guests to cut the ceremonial red ribbon.

“It has been a long road since Sandy, but today we are very pleased to officially dedicate this beautiful new facility, which stands as an important symbol of the neighborhood’s resilience and will to survive,” said Msgr. LoPinto. “The Charles F. Murphy Early Childhood Development Center now provides high-quality early childhood development services to low-income house-
holds with children ages 2 to 5 years old. These services allow parents to seek gainful employment, knowing their children are in good hands, and help them to build greater financial independence and family stability."

The state-of-the-art facility features a 17,000-square-foot, three-story steel-reinforced building with a defensible ground level (to protect against future flooding). A portion of the building is a fiber-cement board rain screen using integral-colored panels fastened to an aluminum sub-girt system. The gaps between the panels allow the air pressure within the wall cavity to be equalized with that of the pressure on the exterior of the building, allowing water and vapor to freely drain and evaporate. These structural features will withstand future tropical storms subject to climate-change related influences.

Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada to partner with Catholic Energies

Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada is currently undergoing a major renovation of its shelter and campus properties in Las Vegas. CC-SN asked Catholic Energies to partner with them so that their capital campaign did not need to include paying for new solar, roofing and energy efficiency improvements for the entire campus. CC-SN is pleased to have found a third party investor for all of these improvements to enhance their climate control and lighting and provide a cleaner energy source. This combination will substantively reduce annual operating expenses. Catholic Energies was also successful in securing a large incentive rebate from NV Energy for solar installation.

Catholic Charities of West Tennessee welcomes new executive director

Catholic Charities of West Tennessee announced the appointment of S. Kelley Henderson as its new executive director. Henderson will succeed Monsignor Al Kirk, who has been serving as the interim executive director since June of 2019.

Kelley comes to Memphis from Atlanta where he recently served as chief executive officer of Action Ministries, which cares for the hungry, homeless and youth across North Georgia. He has been involved with homeless outreach and poverty issues since 2006.

Kelley says his work with the poor was an “unexpected vocation,” and one that has offered him purpose and inspiration for the past decade. He is passionate about volunteerism and often speaks on the topic to help communities connect and learn how to be neighbors. Kelley also speaks to churches and other groups frequently on the intersection of spirituality and service from his perspective as a professed Lay Carmelite brother.

“It is an exciting time to be joining the faithful of the Diocese of Memphis and I am humbled by the commitment of so many who serve across West Tennessee,” Kelley said. “I ask for your prayers in joining this important ministry and for the continued support of our generous benefactors who make all this work possible.”

Kelley is a graduate of Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Ga., with a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration, and has a Masters in Theology from Spring Hill in Mobile, Ala.
Delaware native Michael J. Hare will receive the Msgr. Thomas J. Reese Award at the Catholic Charities Annual Tribute Dinner on Wednesday, April 1, 2020.

The Most Reverend W. Francis Malooly, D.D., bishop of the Diocese of Wilmington, will present the award at the dinner to be held at the Chase Center on the Riverfront.

The award, created in 1989 in memory of Msgr. Thomas J. Reese, community activist and longtime director of Catholic Social Services, the forerunner of Catholic Charities, recognizes exemplary individuals who have demonstrated a deep commitment to promoting and restoring the well-being of people – Catholic Charities’ mission.

“Michael J. Hare has demonstrated his dedication to community service throughout the years and continues to selflessly serve the most vulnerable in our communities,” said Richelle A. Vible, executive director.

Hare serves on Bishop Malooly’s Pastoral Council and on the Vocations Admissions Board for the Diocese of Wilmington. He also served as president of Saint Elizabeth Parish Council and is a founder and chair of the Annual Feast of Saint Elizabeth Celebration. He is co-chair of the Saint Patrick’s Day Society, which has raised more than $2 million for the Saint Patrick’s Center, an organization that provides vital services for the underserved on Wilmington’s east side.

A native of Wilmington, Hare is a graduate of Saint Edmond’s Academy and Archmere Academy. He received a B.S. in Public Administration from St. Joseph’s University. He also attended Fels Center of Government at the University of Pennsylvania.

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- Richelle A. Vible
Asking for help is hard. It’s humbling and often humiliating. For those most in need in our society, the traditional model of providing financial assistance or case management is often transactional, cold and ineffective. Rather than motivating people to keep going, it makes people feel helpless and hopeless. Instead of moving forward, people get stuck.

Most assistance programs solve an immediate need. Your electricity is going to be cut off? We’ll pay the bill for you. Problem solved. Except that the disconnection notice was a symptom, not the problem. The problem is that the family can’t afford electricity. The assistance the family received did not resolve the problem. Many might ask: “Why don’t they solve the problem themselves by getting a better job?”

Imagine you are exhausted from working two minimum wage jobs that don’t even pay your bills. Your car broke down so you’re sitting in the cold waiting for the bus that was supposed to come 10 minutes ago. Questions race through your mind: “Am I going to be fired for being late? Is the daycare going to kick out my kids because I don’t get my paycheck until after the bill is due? How am I going to get that electric bill paid?” Are you feeling overwhelmed yet? People living in poverty have not only compounded barriers to overcome but also stress from those barriers, which increases the difficulty of making decisions to move forward.

Our experiences change the way our brains develop. Many experts believe that learning is actually the process of making connections between cause and effect.
The brain develops from the bottom up; basic instincts grow and then develop into complex thoughts. We are generally born with the part of our brain that keeps us alive up and running. Childhood is largely spent on development of sensory processing, movement coordination, and regulating the limbic system, which is the part of the brain that processes emotion. Think of babies who scream like they’re dying the moment they feel hungry, but later learn to communicate the need and get it met without all the drama.

The last area of the brain to fully mature is the frontal lobe, responsible for planning and decision making. Maturation usually takes place throughout adolescence and young adulthood, within the parent/child relationship. Proper development of the frontal lobe helps regulate emotions, letting us respond appropriately to a situation. For some, parents were never around – whether they were off scoring drugs or working three jobs. The parents weren’t there to provide the stability and guidance that strengthen the connection between the frontal lobe and the limbic system within the child. These people have lived in a survival mode their whole lives. Their limbic brain remains unregulated and they continue to react to stressful life events out of instinct, not thoughtful planning. Yes, we all must pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, but to do so we first need a pair of boots.

Behavioral science tells us that misbehavior points to an unmet need. A great case manager knows that a client yelling at his or her boss or not showing up to work after a perceived slight may be connected to the client’s brain in fight or flight mode. With respectful curiosity, the case manager can help the client learn to regulate emotions so the client responds to stress in a way that doesn’t create more problems.

People who’ve experienced trauma – and living in poverty is traumatic – must also learn that survival tools used in one situation don’t necessarily work in another. If lying about what you did today keeps your husband from beating you, then it does not follow that lying will keep your boss from firing you when you’re late for work. If the brain created a connection between lying and avoiding danger, that connection is difficult to undo. The brain has to build a new connection linking the avoidance of danger with something other than lying. The brain will have to experience the new connection over and over again before it is stronger than the original. This process takes time and focus.

Part of a case manager’s job is to guide clients through this development process. To guide a client well, case managers must understand that poverty is not a character defect. Clients don’t need to “try harder;” they need to develop functions they’ve never been given room to develop before. And respecting their dignity and worth means walking with them through setbacks and successes because progress is never linear. When case management is done well, the case manager becomes a witness to people learning to create change in their lives, people rising out of poverty.
May 11-15, 2020
O’Grady Leadership Institutes, Bethany Center
Lutz, Fla.
Scott Hurd
shurd@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

October 27-30, 2020
Annual Gathering
Cleveland, Ohio
Jean Beil
jbeil@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

Don’t forget Charities USA is going digital! Sign up today!

SCAN HERE
CCUSA’s Annual Gathering is the preeminent gathering for Catholic Charities professionals, volunteers and partners to advance our work, strategize about poverty reduction and celebrate our shared identity. Attendees will come away with innovative program ideas, templates for future work and skills to meet the needs of those we serve.

Please visit our website: www.ccusaannualgathering.org