



While walking the aisles of a department store in Chicago recently I came across a collection of elves and reindeer. They were holding a sign with one word on it—**Believe**. As Christmas approaches the word “believe” lights up buildings, adorns pillows, and decorates fireplace mantels.

I am reminded of the timeless Christmas classic *Miracle on 34th Street*. Susan, the little girl in the movie who was raised to be a Santa Claus skeptic and her mother who was jaded by life’s disappointments end up rallying around Kris Kringle after experiencing his warmth, wisdom, and unwavering spirit of compassion. They become believers!

In the film, the words “I Believe” decorated buttons on the lapels of those who proudly supported Kris Kringle and his authenticity. Radio City and Macy’s flashed the word **BELIEVE** in dazzling lights and a little girl crayoned the words “I believe” and taped it to her apartment window.

At a much deeper level, the film’s focus on whether or not to *believe* in Santa and his authenticity can be seen as a metaphor for our belief in God who has the ability to do all things. While we may struggle with proving that God exists, you and I, through the gift of faith, believe in God who is real yet unseen. Without the gift of faith we might adopt a skepticism that hardens our hearts to receiving God’s grace.

Do you remember the influence of the people in the film who advocate on behalf of Kris Kringle? I was drawn to their resolute support that rippled hope. Their belief was contagious.

Ironically, those steadfast Kris Kringle supporters remind me of a very special group of individuals. Their belief transforms; it is life-changing. They don’t need to wear buttons on their lapels with the words “I believe”—you can feel their faith alive as they spread a spirit of compassion.

Catholic Charities’ Board Members embrace a firm belief in God whose grace works through the mission of Catholic Charities. Because our board members believe in the mission of Catholic Charities we are able to remove countless obstacles for those we serve. Their leadership and support empowers our efforts to provide help and create hope for the poor and marginalized in southern Minnesota.

I recently asked our board members why they “believe” so strongly in the mission of Catholic Charities. I am humbled and honored to share a few of their responses with you. Enjoy their reflections; experience their warmth, wisdom and unwavering spirit. We are forever grateful that our board members **BELIEVE....**

Fr. Greg Havel: As a priest in the Diocese of Winona it has been a great blessing for me to serve on the Board of Director’s for Catholic Charities. As a pastor, I have had the opportunity to experience the compassionate work of Catholic Charities as they have come to serve the needs of many people in my parishes. The love and concern that the people of Catholic Charities live out for those who are finding life difficult continues to bring hope to me and many others.

Dr. Sidna Tulledge-Scheitel: I love the Catholic faith and believe in the Church’s mission. I embrace Catholic Charities programs targeted to the needs of local populations, regardless of religious affiliation, ethnic background, age, or ability to pay. Catholic Charities staff is super committed, creative, and compassionate!

Dr. Jimmy Bickerstaff: As a longtime supporter of Catholic Charities and their important work, I was honored and happy to be asked to serve on their board. When I began attending board meetings, however, I soon realized that I had only a very limited awareness of the extent of the significant work that this amazing organization does and the very impressive and dedicated staff that serve the poor and vulnerable in our diocese. Catholic Charities of Southern Minnesota is really making a difference in people’s lives. They truly serve Christ daily as they lift up those in need.

Mary Farrell: I have been involved in the Catholic Worker Movement for over 30 years and like Catholic Charities, its foundation is Catholic social teaching. I strong believe in these teachings and believe that the work of Catholic Charities puts these teaching into action. They truly make a difference in the lives of all the people they serve. By serving on the board, I want to help give direction to this organization’s mission because as Catholics we are called to help alleviate poverty and advocate for justice.

Mary Francis Lane: Catholic Charities is an integral part of our diocesan community. I first became aware of Catholic Charities when we moved to Rochester eighteen years ago and I volunteered in the Pregnancy Parenting and Adoption Program. The commitment of staff was a beautiful witness to Christ’s apostolic mission to serve the poorest amongst us. I was honored and humbled to be asked to serve on the board four year ago. When I give of myself as a Catholic Charities board member, I receive more than I give.

Scot Berkley (Board Chair): I believe in the mission of Catholic Charities because I believe in the words of Matthew 25:40—“As you did it to the least of one of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

Wishing you and your loved ones the enriching gift of compassion this Christmas! Our staff, board members, and volunteers send our heartfelt thanks for uplifting the mission of Catholic Charities. You are a ripple of faith, hope, and love for those we serve. God bless you for believing!

Submitted by:

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