



What if you had great power at your fingertips...

Millions of adults and children have watched the *Wizard of Oz*—it's a classic. If you are like me—your first encounter with the movie was a bit daunting. I remember hiding under a blanket for a good portion of it. Life outside of Kansas may have been enticing, but it was also intimidating and scary.

It wasn't until I became an adult that I recognized various life lessons tied to the characters. I began to see the influence of the scarecrow's wisdom, the tin man's love, and the lion's courage and fortitude.

But, beyond all those great qualities—I saw the *power of compassion* come alive in those characters when their priorities shifted to help someone in need; it was a great and life-changing power they all possessed. It was just hidden under the surface.

One of my favorite lines from the movie still echoes in my head. The great and powerful Oz says to Dorothy, **“You always had the power—everything you were looking for was right there with you all along!”**

Catholic Charities 2018 Annual Appeal poses the question, “What if you had great power at your fingertips?”

Paradoxically, Jesus told us that the Kingdom of God is within us. He wanted us to know Heaven was within our reach and that he was the way. And, his example of compassion—that is a life-changing power!

St. Matthew beautifully articulates the glory of Jesus in his compassion. Jesus did not simply act out of compassion. He defined compassion. Matthew tells us that it was out of compassion the dead are made alive (9:18-26), it is out of compassion the blind receive their sight (9:27-31), it is out of compassion the mute can talk (9:32-34), and it is out of compassion Jesus prays for us. (9:35-38). He taught, preached, and healed out of compassion.

Compassion literally means to “suffer with us.” **Jesus shows us over and over again that his entire ministry is summed up by one word—Compassion.** He gave us a new commandment, “Love one another as I have loved you.” (*John 13:34*) His greatest act of love and life-changing compassion for all mankind was that he willingly suffered and died on the cross for our sins.

Compassion calls you and me to experience the suffering of others and to respond by providing help and creating hope. At Catholic Charities, your compassion is life-changing for families in crisis, vulnerable adults and seniors, and children in need.



Last year your compassion changed the lives of over 6,400 individuals residing in over 3,900 households; 60% of those households had an annual income at or below \$25,000.

As the social service arm of our diocese, Catholic Charities' seventeen programs provide compassionate care for people throughout the twenty southernmost counties of Minnesota. It is the power of your compassionate generosity and support that makes the difference.

Because of you:

- Young single parents are provided a pathway to move onward to education completion and upward to employment in a healthcare profession with licensed social workers accompanying them on the journey to self-sufficiency.
- Low income individuals lacking prescription drug insurance are assisted with enrolling in programs in order to receive their prescriptions at reduced or no cost.
- Families, couples, and individuals are provided with competent, caring, and licensed mental health services, regardless of their ability to pay.
- The homeless are provided shelter and compassionate care by caring volunteers who staff the Winona Warming Center.
- Older adults are connected with elementary children in order to develop meaningful relationships across generations through Pen Pal and Book Buddies tutoring programs.
- Adults 65 years and better are provided with support services that allow them to remain independent living in their home and engaged within their community.
- The promise of hope and new beginnings replace memories of fear for children who come from parts of the world where the only childhood memories they have are those of war, death, and destruction.
- Those unable to make reasonable choices about their lives and property are provided with compassionate caseworkers who serve as court appointed guardians/conservators.

Jesus reminded us that what we do for another we do for him (*Matthew. 25:45*). We belong to each other. The key to attaining true happiness and everlasting joy comes when we “suffer with each other” and seek means to remedy it. There is no one who has not, or will not, suffer in this lifetime. We have ample opportunities each and everyday to help alleviate the loneliness, sorrow and heartache of others.

The compassion of Christ lives within you and me. At times, it may just be hidden under the surface like those beloved characters in the *Wizard of Oz*; waiting patiently to come to life. Compassion is the great power at your fingertips!

When we encourage and nurture it within our children we are giving them a priceless gift; a gift that will bring them more joy than anything money can buy. Compassion won't just change the life of the person in need; it will change your life forever!

Your compassionate generosity, your prayers on our behalf, and your support of our mission makes all the difference. Heartfelt thanks for your kind life-changing support of Catholic Charities Annual Appeal—Mother's Day weekend—May 12th and 13th.



Mary Alessio
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