

“Consult not your fears, but your hopes and dreams.”

Pope Paul XXIII

Dear Spirit Circle Member,

This simple yet profound quote captivated me when I read it recently. I don't know about you, but it reminds me of those “fork in the road moments” in life. If you are like me, you've had more than one of them. A fork in the road is a metaphor for a deciding moment in life when a major choice is required. You and I ask ourselves, “What path will I take?”



Ironically, when you and I are standing at that fork in the road “fear” often tries to tempt us. Did you know that “fear not” is used at least 80 times in the bible, most likely because God knows the enemy uses fear to decrease our hope...and limit our victories.

Pope Paul urges you and me not to think not about our frustrations or unfulfilled potential. He encourages you and me to concern ourselves not with what we try and fail achieving, but all that is still possible for you and me to do.

I will never forget caring for a young refugee man who arrived several years ago. War had beaten down on his life—he had lost his home and his loved ones. I was in awe that although he appeared broken, he had not lost hope. In fact, he quoted Dale Carnegie as we chatted over a cup of tea and he shared his thoughts on hope. *“Two men looked out from prison bars, one saw the mud, the other saw the stars.”* He continued to tell me that I was that star in his life and that Catholic Charities was his hope...

How profound, don't you think, that a man who was homeless and outwardly appeared shattered should remind me that hope is like a star and my care for him through Catholic Charities was that light in his life? *“Hope itself is like a star—not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity.”* C.H. Spurgeon

At Catholic Charities we serve those who are experiencing those “fork in the road” moments. Many are suffering with insurmountable challenges. While suffering in life is unavoidable—we strive to be that source of HOPE in the lives of children, families in crisis, vulnerable adults, seniors, refugees, the uninsured, the poor, the homeless and the unborn. **Because of your compassionate support our staff and volunteers provide the hope that allows those we serve to see all that is possible and reach their full potential.**

In 2019, with your help, we served 8,819 persons. You uplifted lives with hope for approximately 1000 more persons than in the prior fiscal year.

When you renew your Spirit Circle membership your compassion provides those who are poor in body and spirit with the hope and help needed for those “fork in the road” moments in life. You are an instrument of God's grace in their

lives; helping them reach their full potential. *Spirit Circle members' leadership gifts of \$500, \$1,000, \$2,000 or more generate the "down payment on the 25% of our operating budget that comes from our loyal donors.*

In 2020, we have an operating budget of \$3 million (encompassing eighteen programs with the addition of a second Warming Center in 2019 for the homeless/serving 20 counties). With God's transforming grace working through you and new members this year, I have every hope we will reach our goal of \$350,000 through the Spirit Circle.

The **HOPE** you inspire through your compassionate generosity as a Spirit Circle leaders:

- **Uplifts** a core principle of your faith—that all persons, especially the poor and vulnerable have dignity and deserve our compassionate care.
- **Serves** your neighbors right here at home in southern Minnesota. We are close to those we serve with offices in Albert Lea, Austin, Mankato, Owatonna, Rochester, Winona, and Worthington.
- **Inspires** HOPE in the lives of thousands each year—regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, faith tradition, or the *ability to pay*.

As a Spirit Circle leader you receive **Stir Into Flame**—your insider **briefing** on what's new at Catholic Charities with a column specifically dedicated to responding to your comments, ideas, and questions. You will also receive free admission to all Catholic Charities workshops and seminars.

A spirit of HOPE uplifts and inspires those we serve in order to deal with those “fork in the road” moments in life and begin again. You alleviate their fears and strengthen their lives. You are the reason those we serve reach full potential and see that with God's grace....all is possible!

I am forever grateful for the gift of your friendship and support of our efforts and for bringing hope to our corner of the world through your Spirit Circle leadership gift.

With heartfelt thanks and my prayers for God's blessings to you and your loved ones,

Mary Alessio

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P.S. When faced with challenges as I serve at Catholic Charities and those “fork in the road” moments I often repeat St. Paul's words in my head *..We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance...character; and character, HOPE!* It reminds me that when we serve as God's instruments...all is possible! Your friendship and support is life-changing. If you feel you are able to increase your pledge a bit this year, it would greatly help us serve the increased number of people who come to our doors. Please know my door is always open. I am a call away if you would like to share your thoughts, ideas, questions, or concerns. God bless you!