

# CARITAS NOW

CATHOLIC CHARITIES BROOKLYN AND QUEENS MAGAZINE | THE CLOSING OF THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



CELEBRATING  
**125**  
YEARS



## *Vatican Blessing:* CELEBRATING 125 YEARS OF HOPE AT CATHOLIC CHARITIES BROOKLYN AND QUEENS

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# LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the remarkable journey of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens during our 125th anniversary, I am filled with gratitude and hope. This milestone has not only allowed us to celebrate our rich history of service but has also provided a unique opportunity to recommit ourselves to our mission of walking alongside those in need.

The culmination of our anniversary celebrations was truly unforgettable, highlighted by the inspiring presence of His Eminence Cardinal Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the USA. His keynote address at St. John's University on November 16th reminded us of the profound truth that "to walk with the poor is to walk with God." These words resonate deeply within our hearts and reinforce our dedication to serving our most vulnerable neighbors.

The following day, we gathered at St. Joseph's Co-Cathedral for a Mass that united our community in prayer and reflection. It was a powerful reminder of our shared commitment to the Gospel call to serve others, especially those who are struggling. The spirit of compassion and solidarity that filled the cathedral was a testament to the incredible work of our staff, volunteers, and partners who embody this mission every day.

As we close this chapter of our anniversary celebrations, we also enter a season of giving. During Thanksgiving and Christmas, we continue to proudly serve the poor and marginalized in our community. Our programs are geared towards ensuring that every individual and family can experience the warmth of the holiday season, from providing meals to distributing gifts. This work is made possible through your unwavering support and generosity, and we invite you to join us in extending our reach even further.

Together, we have the unique opportunity to continue making a difference in the lives of countless individuals and families throughout Brooklyn and Queens. Your support has been invaluable, and I encourage you to engage with us as we move forward in faith and service.

Thank you for being an essential part of our journey. May we all continue to walk together in the spirit of love, compassion, and service.

Peace,



Monsignor Alfred LoPinto  
President and CEO  
Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens





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For 125 years, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens has been providing quality social services to the neighborhoods of Brooklyn and Queens and currently offers 160-plus programs and services for children, youth, adults, older adults, and those struggling with mental illness. Since 1975, Catholic Charities Progress of Peoples Development Corporation, the affordable housing developer of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens, has been transforming vacant land and buildings into affordable housing units and transforming the lives of individuals and families. We've completed more than 4,567 units with supportive services for seniors, families, veterans and the formerly homeless. Since 2020, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens has provided much-needed food packages and services at 60 Catholic Charities parish-based food pantries and has distributed over \$15 million in food.

CARITAS NOW Magazine will bring you quarterly insight into the programs and services offered by Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens.

For more information, or to be removed from our list, contact:

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# VATICAN REPRESENTATION CULMINATES THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens recently concluded the year long celebrations of their momentous milestone—125 years of unwavering service to the community. This remarkable journey culminated

in two meaningful events held on November 16th and 17th, uniting diocesan and community leaders, advocates, and supporters to reflect on the agency's profound impact while addressing the ongoing

challenges of poverty.

The weekend festivities were graced by the presence of His Eminence Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States. His participation underlined the significance of this jubilee, as the agency continues to embody the spirit of service and charity so deeply



rooted in its mission.

Kicking off the celebrations on Saturday, Catholic Charities joined forces with St. John's University for the 12th Annual Poverty Conference. This year's theme, "Poverty: A Multidimensional Problem; Charity: A Multidimensional Solution," explored the complexities surrounding poverty while highlighting collaborative approaches to charitable solutions. The morning session featured a thought-provoking keynote address by Dr. Sabina Alkire, the Director of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. Speaking to a captivated audience, Dr. Alkire emphasized the importance of effectively measuring poverty in our evolving society, laying the groundwork for meaningful discussions throughout the day.

The afternoon brought further inspiration as Cardinal Pierre delivered a stirring keynote titled "To Walk with the Poor is to Walk with God." (For more on the Cardinal's address, turn to page 6 of this issue.) His message resonated deeply with attendees, encapsulating the very essence of Catholic Charities' mission. Following

of Brooklyn, and Rev. Msgr. Alfred P. LoPinto, President and CEO of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens. The co-cathedral was filled to capacity with over 1,000 attendees, all united in gratitude for the agency's enduring mission to support vulnerable communities.

In his closing remarks, Msgr. LoPinto expressed profound gratitude to those present, stating, "We're ecstatic over you being here with us today. Moving forward, our guiding question will always be 'Why?' Why do we do what we do? As Cardinal Christophe Pierre beautifully articulated, we do it because we are the hands of Jesus, operating out of the heart of Jesus." His words served as a powerful reminder that the work of Catholic Charities is not only about providing services but also about fostering a compassionate community that cares for its most vulnerable members.

The Mass concluded on a high note with a musical performance by the Neocatechumenal Way Community, which added a heartfelt touch to the occasion and fostered a sense of joy and fellowship among all present.

***Why do we do what we do? As Cardinal Christophe Pierre beautifully articulated, we do it because we are the hands of Jesus, operating out of the heart of Jesus.***

the Cardinal's address, the leadership of Catholic Charities presented insights on pressing issues such as affordable housing, food insecurity, and mental health, sparking dialogues on how the community can mobilize to address these critical challenges.

On Sunday, the celebrations continued with a Mass of Thanksgiving at the Co-Cathedral of St. Joseph. This liturgical service also marked the seventh World Day of the Poor, reinforcing the theme of solidarity with those in need. The Mass was co-celebrated by Cardinal Pierre, Most Reverend Robert J. Brennan, Bishop

As Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens reflects on this milestone celebration, it is evident that the work addressing poverty and supporting those in need is far from over. The agency remains steadfast in its mission, committed to promoting community engagement and compassion for years to come. The legacy of service continues, ensuring that the hands of Jesus will always reach out to uplift those in need, embodying the spirit of charity that has defined Catholic Charities for 125 years and beyond. ■





## **WALKING WITH THE POOR:** *His Eminence Christophe Pierre's Inspiring Call to Action at St. John's University's 12th Annual Conference on Poverty*

**On November 16, a momentous event marking the agency's 125 years of service united esteemed guests to honor the pivotal role of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens in aiding those in need. This significant gathering was a part of St. John's University's 12th Annual Conference on Poverty.**

During the afternoon conference, His Eminence Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, joined Most Reverend Robert Brennan, Bishop of Brooklyn, Msgr. Alfred LoPinto, President and CEO of Catholic Charities

Brooklyn and Queens, agency Board Members, staff and friends to deliver a keynote address titled "To Walk With the Poor is to Walk With God." Lead staff members from Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens also presented about addressing poverty at the local level, demonstrating how Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens is part of the solution.

In his keynote address, Cardinal Pierre emphasized the importance of a compassionate approach to serving the poor, highlighting the need to meet their needs according to the teachings of the gospel. He likened the work of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens to that of a "field hospital," underscoring the necessity of providing immediate care.

"One of the good things about the work you do with Catholic Charities is that you are always encountering people in immediate need of God's saving love," he said. "It is often very concrete: people are hungry and thirsty; they need food. People are homeless; they need shelter. People are imprisoned; they need someone to visit them. Each day, you come face-to-face with what Jesus said and what Pope Francis repeated in his Message for the Fifth World Day of the Poor: 'The poor you will always have with you.'"

This reality—that there will always be poor people among us—reveals the injustice of the world; however, it also provides a daily opportunity for us to see the face of Jesus Christ, especially in those who are poor. As Jesus said, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you



did for me.” To love and serve the poor is to love and serve God. To walk with the poor is to walk with God.

At the beginning of his talk, Cardinal Pierre encouraged those involved with Catholic Charities: “While your work is difficult, and at times it may seem like, despite all your efforts, there is still so much more that you cannot do, every act of accompaniment and love that you perform is of great value to the Lord. Each person is of infinite dignity and worth.”

Drawing on the teachings of Pope Francis, he stressed the importance of recognizing the dignity of every individual and the call to love and serve those in need. By connecting the mission of Catholic Charities to synodality and the upcoming Jubilee Year of Hope, a special year in the Catholic Church’s calendar dedicated to hope and mercy, the Cardinal reaffirmed that charity is a multi-dimensional solution to poverty, urging ongoing action for justice alongside acts of love and service.

Cardinal Pierre concluded his keynote address with the following remarks:

*“Thank you again for this opportunity to share the ways in which the universal proclamation of the Church, especially as articulated by Pope Francis, is being echoed through the service of Catholic Charities in this Diocese. For the last 125 years, this service has incarnated Christ’s mission in every generation in which it has been active.*

*On behalf of Pope Francis, I commend each and every one of you, as well as your community as a whole, for your commitment to Christ, whose Vicar he is, and to the Church’s mission of evangelization.*

*I pray that you will continue to grow in the ‘comforting joy of evangelizing’ that we find when we walk together; that your communion with Christ will deepen as you encounter the love of His Sacred Heart; and that the upcoming Jubilee will be a time of surpassing mercy and growing freedom for you, your families, and those you serve in the name of Christ.*

*Thank you, and may God bless you all.”*

To read the entire keynote address, please visit our website at [www.ccbq.org](http://www.ccbq.org). ■



Most Reverend Bishop Robert J. Brennan opened the afternoon session of the conference and introduced Cardinal Pierre.



Speakers and Representatives of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens and Saint Johns University with Bishop Brennan and Cardinal Pierre.



Photo left: Claudia Salazar, Vice President of Clinics, Recovery and Rehabilitative Services, speaks on the impact of Mental Well-being on poverty.



Photo right: Richard Slizeski, Senior Vice President of Mission, gives a talk on Food Insecurity in our communities.





# A Tradition of Care and Compassion

## CATHOLIC CHARITIES DISTRIBUTES 4,100 TURKEYS THIS THANKSGIVING

The spirit of Thanksgiving was alive and well throughout Brooklyn and Queens as Catholic Charities distributed more than 4,100 turkeys and chickens to local parishes for individuals and families in need. The annual Turkey Distribution, which took place at Msgr. Joseph Pfeiffer Resource Center at 155-55 Cross Bay Boulevard in Howard Beach, is part of Catholic Charities' ongoing mission to support vulnerable communities and bring hope to those facing food insecurity. For many years, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens has been providing thousands of families with the means to celebrate a traditional Thanksgiving meal and fostering community and solidarity between local parishes and their parishioners.

The Turkey Distribution brought together

a network of volunteers, staff, and local parish leaders who work together to ensure that assistance is provided to those who need it most. Representatives from 35 parishes gathered to collect turkeys, with each parish receiving between 50 and 100 birds. These turkeys will be distributed to families through the parish food pantries, serving as collection points. In addition, Catholic Charities provided holiday staples such as stuffing and vegetables from its 60 food pantries throughout the diocese, ensuring that families receive a complete meal.

Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens extends its heartfelt gratitude to Al and Maria Cantanese, who have upheld a ten-year tradition by donating turkeys again this year in honor of their parents. Additional donations of turkeys and food assistance came from EJ Electric, the NYC District Council of Carpenters, ACE Endico, All-Boro Inc., Alba Construction – Commercial Contractors in NYC, Uplift New York Hispanic Federation, Univision Nueva York Contigo, and Catholic Charities of New York. In total, these generous donors provided over 2,100 turkeys, with the remaining supply contributed by Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens.

This event is a testament to the collaborative efforts of Catholic Charities

Brooklyn and Queens and local parishes to uplift our most vulnerable neighbors and foster community spirit during the holiday season.

The Thanksgiving Turkey Distribution is just one of many programs aimed at addressing the urgent needs of those facing hunger and hardship in our local neighborhoods. ■







*St. Mark's Roman Catholic Church's Food Pantry in Brooklyn provided over 90 families with turkeys, chickens, fresh fruits, eggs, and plenty of non-perishables.*



*Our Early Childhood Development Center distributed 400 turkeys to our amazing early childhood families. In this photo: families from Sunset Park Head Start.*





Pictured from left to right: Very Reverend Patrick J. Keating, Esq., Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens and Affiliated Agencies; Reverend Monsignor Robert J. Romano, Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Brooklyn and Assistant Chief Chaplain, NYPD; Robert J. Pape, Jr., of The Paul L. Martin Charitable Trust; Thomas J. Grech, President and Chief Executive Officer, Queens Chamber of Commerce; Most Reverend Robert J. Brennan, Bishop of Brooklyn; Francesca Yellico, Executive Director, Bridge to Life; Vincent D. LeVien, Director of External Affairs, DeSales Media Group; and Reverend Monsignor Alfred P. LoPinto, President and Chief Executive Officer, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens and Affiliated Agencies.

# 2024 Bishop's Humanitarian Award Dinner

## Celebrating the Spirit of Service and 125 Years of Compassion

**Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens raised over \$2 million in a record-breaking annual fundraiser on Thursday, September 26 at the 2024 Bishop's Humanitarian Award Dinner.**

Held at Cipriani Wall Street, all proceeds benefit the agency's more than 160+ programs and services. At the event, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens presented Thomas J. Grech, president and chief executive officer of the Queens Chamber of Commerce, and Robert J. Pape, Jr., of The Paul L. Martin Charitable Trust, with the Bishop's Humanitarian Award. Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens also presented Francesca Yellico, executive director of Bridge to Life, with the Ubi Caritas Award, and Vincent D. LeVien, director of external affairs at DeSales Media Group, with the Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan Service Award. Reverend Monsignor Robert J. Romano, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Brooklyn and

assistant chief chaplain for the NYPD served as the Master of Ceremonies. Reverend Monsignor John Bracken, 125th Anniversary Dinner Committee Chair and pastor of St. Francis De Sales in Queens began the evening's celebration with an invocation.

The 2024 Bishop's Humanitarian Award Dinner was co-chaired by the Most Reverend Robert J. Brennan, Bishop of Brooklyn, serving the people of Brooklyn and Queens. "This is a special way to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the founding of a wonderful organization," said Bishop Brennan. "Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens has a long-standing tradition of serving the most vulnerable among us, embodying the values of faith, hope, and charity in all that they do. Let us continue to be the hands and feet of Christ in our world. Let us work together to ensure that every individual we encounter knows they are seen, valued, and loved. Our work is not done until every person

in Brooklyn and Queens can live with dignity, security, and hope."

Reverend Monsignor Alfred P. LoPinto, president and chief executive officer of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens, emphasized the importance of donor support for the agency's work and highlighted the 125th anniversary. "Your support tonight and throughout the year is so vital in enabling us to continue providing our neighbors with the helping hand they need to get back on their feet again."

Very Reverend Patrick J. Keating, Esq., deputy chief executive officer of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens, had the distinct privilege of introducing and presenting the evening's honorees. "The lives and work of our honorees exemplify the spirit of compassion and selflessness. They have not only excelled in their respective fields but have also demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to service and justice."





Musical Guest Joe Piscopo serenades the crowd.

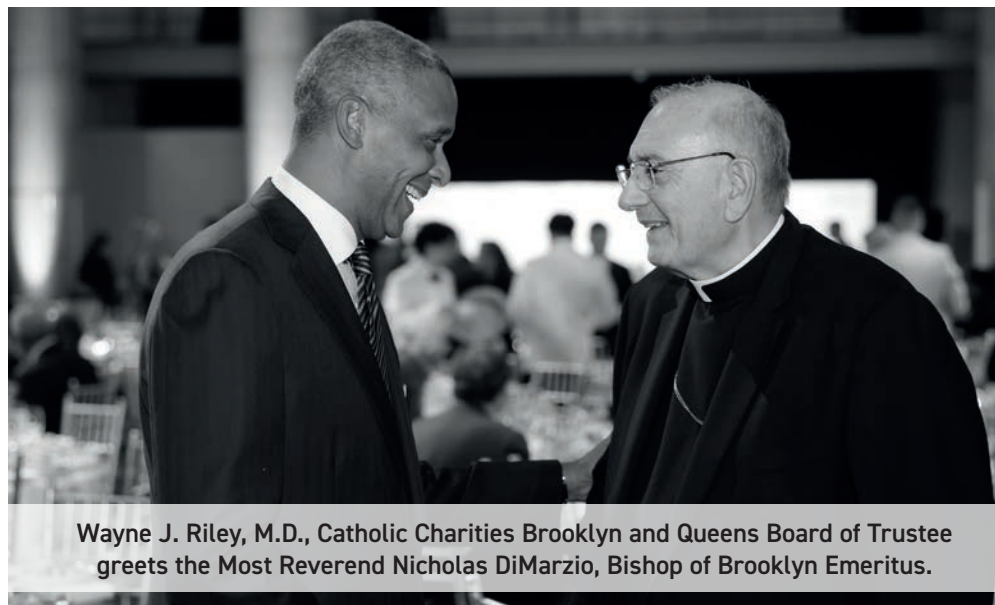
The Bishop's Humanitarian Award is presented annually to an individual who shows personal commitment to the well-being of the residents of our diocese. The Ubi Caritas Award is presented for distinguished, unselfish support of human services as a reminder that true charity is the response of the human heart of God's love for all people. The Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan Service Award is presented in memory of Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan, an ardent advocate for social justice who dedicated more than 50 years to improving the lives of New Yorkers in need. The Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan Service Award is given to honor others who have followed in his footsteps by devoting their lives to the people of Brooklyn and Queens.

Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens also presented the 2024 John J. Farrell Award to Leocadia Hernandez and Brenda Rodriguez who have reached 30 years of service at the agency.

The event included a mini-documentary video highlighting the important work of Catholic Charities' 125 years of service to the people of Brooklyn and Queens, a silent auction, and entertainment by Joe Piscopo. The Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, Ph.D., D.D., Bishop Emeritus of Brooklyn concluded the evening with a benediction. ■



Guests of the dinner celebrate the fine and continued work of all those at Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens.



Wayne J. Riley, M.D., Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens Board of Trustee greets the Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, Bishop of Brooklyn Emeritus.



A look at the setup for the dinner at the breathtaking Cipriani Wall Street.



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## Spreading Joy: Extend a Helping Hand at Christmas

Please give generously to **Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens** through the special collection at your parish on Christmas Day. Your generosity allows Catholic Charities to help the hungry, vulnerable and those in need.



**"Blessed are the open hands that embrace the poor and help them: they are the hands that bring hope."**

- Pope Francis



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