



The Matthew 25 Project

A Charitable Service Relationship between Parishes & Catholic Charities

*A church-based charitable service "is independent of parties or ideologies,
but sees with the heart where love is needed and acts accordingly,
utilizing planning, foresight and cooperation with other like-minded institutions".*
(Deus Caritas Est, #31)

What is The Matthew 25 Project?

A resource to parishes and their commissions to assist them in exploring their own parish social ministry initiatives, or in developing or evaluating their current social ministries. A partnership can take any of various forms, such as:

- A mutually supportive relationship between a parish & Catholic Charities to bring the love of God to suffering neighbors of all faiths through concrete acts of charity
- A training relationship for parish staff and/or volunteers
- A relationship between a parish & Catholic Charities to offer parish-based healing ministries in areas like meeting basic needs, needs of pregnant women and/or those who are suffering from abortion or divorce
- An educational relationship where Catholic Charities can help educate parishes about the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and practical applications
- Other
- Not the same as The *Matthew 25 Award* which is a part of the project, has an application process, and is awarded yearly to one parish in the diocese

How is this Relationship created?

- The Parish Social Ministry (PSM) program director meets with the Pastor, and/or others he designates to begin a conversation and consider possibilities. When geographically not feasible, the meeting is held by phone conversation or by video-conferencing to talk about areas the parish wants to consider. A follow-up plan is discussed at that first meeting.

Why engage in a ministry relationship with Catholic Charities?

- To share in the summons of Matthew 25 (*When I was hungry, you gave me to eat, etc.*)
- To serve more brothers and sisters in need or in vulnerable situations
- To increase the confidence of volunteers and staff when responding to persons/families in need

(Over)

- To grow personally and spiritually through Catholic Charities trainings, such as:
 1. How *Catholic Social Teaching* and *Matthew 25* guide us in offering compassionate care and support
 2. *Renew & Rekindle* parish Retreat Days
 3. Confidentiality
 4. Weatherization programs for parishes
 5. Recruiting/ training/supervising volunteers
 6. Assessing and screening for need
 7. Suggesting other community resources
 8. Dealing with "insistent" people requesting help
 9. Saying "no" compassionately
 10. Providing parish-based, life-affirming support to pregnant mothers
 11. Responding in love to those affected by abortion
 12. Offering parish-based "*Divorce & Beyond*" support groups

What can Catholic Charities PSM do for the parish?

- Provide training to volunteers and staff in areas mentioned above
- Offer sample forms to use for assisting people who request assistance, or help the parish develop its own forms
- Be consultants to the parish or Social Justice Committee to explore, develop and/or evaluate their social ministries
- When such a relationship is created with Catholic Charities, it opens the possibility of the parish receiving one-time emergency services funds raised through the Bishop's Capital Campaign

What would the parish's responsibilities be in such a relationship?

- Call their own assistance program a *Matthew 25 Project* – i.e.: *The Portland Mt. 25 Project, or the St. Mary's Mt. 25 Project, etc.* This vision is supported by the Chancery Finance Office which has created standardized accounting for this Project
- Have standard procedures to assess/screen requests for help to their *Matthew 25 Project* and to make decisions about requests; and to share those procedures with Catholic Charities PSM (not all parishes will do it the same way – i.e.: some will use committees; some will have one person deciding; some will require the pastor's approval, etc.)
- Use "Best Practices", which are generally accepted ways to serve people. Our trainings cover these. Most are common sense and already used by parishes
- Recruit and supervise parish volunteers
- Provide PSM with very simple quarterly service statistics for their *Matthew 25 Project* (easily done on a spreadsheet PSM can provide that can be e-mailed)
- Give PSM feedback on how things are working and suggestions for improvement

A church-based charitable service "responds to immediate needs and specific situations with more than "technical care", but with genuine love and heartfelt concern that enables others to experience the richness and totality of their humanity, made in the image and likeness of God". (Deus Caritas Est, #31)