**"It is not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving."**
**Without charity, not the Church Jesus intended**

*Keynote Address by Most Reverend John T. Folda, Bishop of Fargo*

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*Catholic Charities North Dakota Annual Luncheon*
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It is a particular pleasure for me to join you this year for the annual Catholic Charities Lunch.  But I have to apologize for being late, about a year late.  You might remember that last year, when I was supposed to join you, I came down with a little health issue that managed to make national news and international news.  But I'm all better now, and here I am, better late than never!

I'm happy to see so many of you here, which indicates to me the level of support for Catholic Charities in our community.  I've been deeply impressed with what I've learned about Catholic Charities since coming to the Diocese of Fargo, and I can only hope that the work of Catholic Charities will continue to grow and flourish.  Of course, we might wish for the day when there would be no need for the work of Catholic Charities, but while there is need, Catholic Charities will be there.  The many programs offered by Catholic Charities truly manifest the love of Christ for his people, and we are privileged to be a part of that work, whether as staff members, volunteers, or benefactors.

In fact, the work of charity is inherent in the life of the Catholic Church, because of our charter from Jesus Christ himself, who said to us, "Love one another as I have loved you."  Just as Jesus reached out to us in mercy when we were lost in the darkness, so too must we reach out in mercy and compassion to others, no matter who they are or what their circumstances.  In the Acts of the Apostles, we find that, from the very beginning, the apostles were conscious of the needs of others in their community, and they appointed the seven deacons, or servants, to care for those in need.  And that instinct towards charity has been part of the life of the Church ever since.

You might even say then that charity is in the DNA of the Church.  Pope Benedict XVI taught us that, "For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being" (*Deus Caritas Est*).  The work of charity is just as essential to the Church as is proclaiming the Word of God and celebrating the sacraments. Without this charity, we become detached from the foundation of love that underlies everything Jesus did for us.  So, charity is at the heart of the Church's life, and without charity, we simply are not the Church that Jesus has intended us to be.

Most of us here remember Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the so-called "saint of the gutters."  I had the chance to meet Mother Teresa very briefly, and have always been in awe of her life and work.  She died of course in 1997, but her witness lives on in our memories and imaginations, for Catholics and non-Catholic alike.  In my recent travels, a flight attendant asked if I was a priest, and then told me she was not Catholic but loved our Pope Francis and Mother Teresa.  She spoke at some length about Mother Teresa, and this illustrated for me the powerful impression of the Church that she has left on the world.  You might even say that Mother Teresa is the patron saint of Catholic charity in our time, because she embodied in every way the charity

that Christ exercises through his Church.  She was able to see Christ in everyone, especially in the face of the beggar, the homeless person, the dying person, or anyone in any need at all.  And the hallmark of her charitable activity was love, to love each person as Christ standing before us.  In fact, what she did for the poorest of the poor, she would say she did for Christ, and in serving the poorest of the poor, she was serving Christ.

Mother Teresa showed us that we don't have to go to the slums of Calcutta to exercise charity.  We must exercise it wherever we are, even in the prosperity of a first-world country like ours.  She was also a constant reminder that the work of charity in the Church is not just social work.  This is not to denigrate social work, which is a very important form of service.  But the charity we exercise is more; it is mercy and compassion motivated by love.  This is what sets us apart.  In our work of charity, the Church is moved by love for Christ, and in this way, we learn to love others, especially those who come to us in any need.  Mother Teresa said, "It is not how much we give but how much love we put into giving."  This can apply to those who are benefactors of this work, and to those who carry out the work in person.  "It is not how much we give but how much love we put into giving."  The story is told of a journalist coming to see the work of Mother Teresa and her sisters in Calcutta.  He witnessed Mother cleaning the sores of a dying man, and said, "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars."  And Mother replied simply, "Neither would I."  What she did, she did for love of God, and that is the way of Christian charity.

But, as you may know, our works of charity sometimes meet up with obstacles.  I don't want to get into politics at this event, but some in our government would like to constrain our charitable works.  They would allow us to maintain our Catholic beliefs and moral principles only if we exclusively serve other Catholics.  But of course, this goes against everything we stand for.  We help others not because *they* are Catholic, but because *we* are Catholic.  Just as in the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus teaches the universal mandate of charity, so do we extend charity, mercy, and compassion to anyone who comes to us for assistance.

And so, I thank you, all of you, for your dedication to the mission and work of Catholic Charities.  I pray that this work will grow, and that more people like yourselves will become actively involved in the charitable work of the Church.  Let's continue to grow this event and extend the reach of Catholic Charities, which is the hand of Christ's love in the Church.  Thank you.