

The Newsletter from  
Catholic Charities  
419 NE Madison Avenue  
Peoria, IL 61603  
ccdop.org



**Catholic Charities**  
DIOCESE OF PEORIA



"You did it unto me."

### Did you know?

- We have a Help Line
- We have two Baby Pantries
- We have two Food Pantries
- We have a Furniture Bank
- We have a Lunch Kitchen
- We have Senior Services/Counseling

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### *From Sister's Desk...*

Many blessings!

It is joy to embark on this adventure of love and to be given the opportunity to be the new Director of Catholic Charities. Sr. Ana Pia is remaining as the Director of Evangelization and Faith Formation. With your help and God's grace, I am launching new programs to help those in need in the Diocese of Peoria. This summer and in the Fall I will be meeting with priests in the various vicariates to identify needs. I am also meeting with those working on existing programs of Catholic Charities to learn how we can best support and expand these programs. Additionally, I am recruiting volunteers to become parish and school representatives for Catholic Charities in order to launch the Building Bridges of Hope program that will include the St. Nicolas mobile pantry. Also, we hope to launch the Acts of Love campaigns throughout the year to collect different needed items to create a movement of solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need locally, nationally, and internationally.

I was born and raised in Miami by Cuban parents that immigrated to the United States in the 1960's. I was

born without my left hand but through the years I have seen how this has been used by God to build bridges of Hope. My little arm has the form of a happy face at the end of it and this has been God's stamp that he created me in love and for love. I have seen him use me to bring healing to the brokenness in people's lives through my own challenges in life.

My educational background includes a bachelor's degree in Social Work and a Master's in Educational Leadership. As a social worker, I have worked with individuals in crisis and have had the opportunity to provide support to those suffering from mental illness, homelessness, drug addictions, domestic violence, unplanned pregnancies, and numerous other afflictions that can impact a person from knowing their dignity and worth.

In 2003, I felt the calling to respond to my vocation and I entered the Religious Institute of the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary. I made my First Profession on January 24, 2006 and my Perpetual Vows on August 15, 2015. As a religious sister, I served as the North Dade Crisis Pregnancy Center Director.



Then, for 11 years, I served at St. Mary's Cathedral School as a 5th grade classroom teacher, religion teacher, Vice Principal, and for 6 years, as Principal. St. Mary's School is a beautiful beacon of hope in an impoverished section of Miami called Little Haiti. Last year, I was given the privilege to serve as the middle school religion teacher at St. Agnes Academy, in one of Miami's wealthiest areas. Whether rich or poor, immigrant or American, young or old in all my missions what is clear is that everyone needs healing, love, and the mercy of God's Grace to know their dignity. It is a great joy for me to be entrusted with this new mission to enliven the spiritual and corporal works of mercy here in Illinois.

May love Always Triumph!  
United in the love of the  
Pierced Hearts,  
Sr. Michelle Fernandez,  
SCTJM

## Backpack Program

Through the generosity of many donors we are able to provide several backpacks filled with notebooks, pencils, pens, rulers, and much more to children in need around the diocese each summer before school. We distributed them in LaSalle, Quad Cities, Normal, Champaign, Galesburg, DePue,

Rantoul, Canton and Peoria this year. I wish I could share with all of you the thankfulness and gratitude of our many recipients. Over the years, Mike Miller car dealership gathers donations from its employees for both the Backpack and Christmas programs. We are truly thankful for his continued help.



## St. Joseph Furniture Bank



The purpose of the St. Joseph Furniture Bank is to provide furniture to people who cannot afford to purchase items on their own. Gently used furniture is available to people in need.

The staff works together with area parishes and other social agencies to determine the need and make referrals. Visit [ccdop.org](http://ccdop.org) for times to drop off furniture you would like to donate.

## Good Samaritan Program

Helping seniors live independently with hope, dignity, and a sense of purpose is the mission of the Catholic Charities Good Samaritan Program of Champaign and Piatt Counties. The Caring Companion service provides seniors with friendly visiting,

assistance with shopping, transportation to appointments, and help with other needs. Home counseling is also available for Seniors. Each month there is a potluck for seniors offering activities and talks on issues that help and inform them.



**GOOD  
SAMARITAN**  
COMMUNITY SERVICES

## St. Andre Bessette Lunch Kitchen

The Bessette Center is located in Peoria at 1825 NE Adams. Since opening one year ago September, the lunch kitchen is now serving hundreds of healthy, brown bag lunches each week to it's guests.

The lunch kitchen is open Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:30am to 1:30pm. Volunteers are needed for food prep starting at 9:30am on Mondays and Wednesdays. Visit [ccdop.org](http://ccdop.org) to submit a volunteer request.



## Baby Pantries

The baby pantries offer clothing, formula, diapers, and other basic baby supplies to several families. Baby items provided are based on the donations received from the community. The need is so great and your help is needed to help assure that the necessary supplies are not depleted.

The baby pantries are always seeking donations of diapers, baby blankets, wipes, baby bath items, clothes, jarred baby food and cereals, baby lotion, baby wash, baby shampoo and much more. Consider having a baby drive at your parish! Donations are always welcomed and appreciated.

## Food Pantry

The issue of hunger in America is a growing concern. Currently, more than 16% of children go to bed without food. In Peoria, we have partnered with Peoria Area Food Bank, as well as Midwestern Food Bank, to help supply the Catholic

Charities Food Pantry in Peoria. We also have a Catholic Charities Food Pantry located at St. Patrick Church in Tolono, IL. Adults must present a photo ID and may receive assistance monthly.







**DONATIONS MAILED TO:**

Catholic Charities  
419 NE Madison Avenue  
Peoria, IL 61603

**BESSETTE CENTER**

1825 NE Adams, Peoria, IL  
309-637-0288

St. Gianna Baby Pantry  
St. Joseph Furniture Bank  
St. Andre Bessette Lunch Kitchen  
Food Pantry

Questions about making a donation?  
Call 309-671-1550 and ask for DEVELOPMENT

***1 Peter 4:10  
As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied Grace.***

**Staff:**

Sr. Michelle Fernandez, SCTJM  
Director

John J. Gibson, II  
Bessette Center

Suzie Meisner  
Coordinator of Ministries

Julie Enzenberger

Kim McAvoy  
Coordinator Senior Program

## Christmas Program

Families from around the entire diocese benefit from the annual Christmas program. Every year we provide families with some basic needs items to help them live with dignity. Volunteers are always appreciated in October to help make gift tags for parishes around the diocese. The greatest need for volunteers is with packing all of the gifts. This gets really busy around the first week of December. All of the packing days take place in Peoria. Please contact us if you can help or submit a volunteer form online at [ccdop.org](http://ccdop.org). If you do not have extra time on your hands maybe you would consider a donation of some items from the "wish list" below. As always, cash donations are always welcome too and may be made online at [ccdop.org](http://ccdop.org) or mailed to:

### Wish List

Bath Towels \* Kitchen Towels \* Wash Cloths \* Shower Curtains \* Soap  
\* Tooth Paste \* Tooth Brushes \* Shampoo/Conditioner \* Toilet Paper  
\* Paper Towels \* Blankets \* Pillows \* Cutting Boards \* Frying Pans \* Wipes  
\* Toys for All Ages \* Diapers \* Winter Hats \* Gloves \* Gift Cards

## St. Nicholas Van

St. Nicolas Mobile Pantry is a ministry of Catholic Charities that serves those in need in the Diocese of Peoria. The individuals will be given items such as blankets, towels, book bags, school supplies, socks, gloves, canes, gift cards and non-perishable food. These items may change on a monthly basis based on need and what is donated.



The ministry also has a spiritual dimension. Individuals will always receive a religious item such as a bible, a rosary, or a holy card. We will take their prayer requests and offer masses in their regions. The ministry will also offer prayer to them at the parish in the form of praying a rosary, a chaplet, or simply praying a vocal prayer with them.

The director, Sr. Michelle will drive to each location with the items. A case manager will travel to meet with those that request case management services with the director. If you are in need or if you want to help those in need visit [ccdop.org](http://ccdop.org) for more information.