AMBASSADORS OF HOPE—
TO THE PARISH, TO THE WORLD

Inspired by Pope Francis, Catholics across the United States hunger for new ways to live their faith—to encounter and respond to excluded and struggling people both locally and globally. A passion for mission inspires Catholics, as disciples of Jesus Christ, to put the teachings of the Church into practice by energizing their parishes to transform their communities and the world. To help Catholics answer this call, Catholic Relief Services has developed the CRS Parish Ambassador Corps.

Overview

The CRS Parish Ambassador Corps will be composed of active parishioners with a passion for living the faith. Identified and commissioned by their pastors (with the help of parish staff), Parish Ambassadors will join a diocesan team of 30-40 leaders. Preparation for action will begin with initial formation in the spiritual roots of global solidarity and training in team building and other leadership skills in a two-day diocesan gathering. Parish Ambassadors will then engage their fellow parishioners in CRS Rice Bowl and at least two other initiatives annually, one of them being local, within the following program areas:

1. Education and Engagement: CRS Rice Bowl, CRS Fair Trade, Catholics Confront Global Poverty,
2. Awareness: CRS Speakers, Bulletin Insert: You Did It For Me.

CRS provides these tools for engagement to help Catholics respond to the Gospel call to help our vulnerable brothers and sisters around the world.

The effect of Parish Ambassadors acting together to engage parishioners will be to:

1. Help people in poverty locally and worldwide by raising funds to support Catholic organizations working with the poor in our diocese and/or organizations working abroad such as CRS, and also by raising awareness of key local and global issues within U.S. parishes.
2. Add vibrancy to U.S. parishes—energizing the parish community as Ambassadors engage parishioners in active discipleship, promoting stronger relationships of solidarity with and opportunities to respond to “the least of these (MT 25:40).”
3. Draw hundreds of thousands of Catholics, particularly young adults and others for whom service can be an on-ramp into parish life, closer to the church through activities that help situate them within a community of disciples of all ages—competent and capable, appreciated and mentored.
4. **Fully engage the emerging church**—Latino, Asian, African, and Caribbean communities who possess a passion for mission, personal connections to developing countries, and growing numbers within U.S. parishes.

Through a nationwide online social network moderated by CRS staff, Parish Ambassadors will exchange support, spirituality, and best practices. Ongoing webinars will also include briefings on global emergencies and key issues impacting people living in poverty overseas. A second convening will deepen formation, provide additional skills for parish animation, and offer additional opportunities for sharing best practices and troubleshooting.

**Diocesan Team**
The key to successful recruitment of CRS Parish Ambassadors is a strong diocesan team. This team reflects the many diversities of race/ethnicity, gender, age, spiritualities, etc. found in the diocese. The diocesan team works with the DD to identify parishes to approach, explain the leadership development and discipleship dimensions of PAC to pastors and pastoral leaders, and then invite them to select two or more leaders for these development opportunities. They are not selling a program or asking the parish to “help out” or “raise money for” CRS or other church organizations. Team members may also take on specific roles at the initial retreat-training, according to their gifts.

**Diocesan Coordinator**
The Diocesan Coordinator (DC) is the public face of the project within the diocese. She or he is the primary contact to the Parish Ambassadors and must have the necessary language skills—bilingual in English and Spanish. The DC animates the community of CRS Parish Ambassadors, reaching out to each of them monthly and not waiting for their phone calls or emails. The DC reports to the Diocesan Director and communicates frequently with the CRS regional Relationship Manager (RM).

[Photo by Philip Laubner/CRS]