



November 29, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The holy seasons of Advent and Christmas remind us that God comes to us in Jesus Christ His Son. The story of the birth of Christ reminds us that He came to us with great humility to remind us of the Father's great affection for us all, especially those in need. As faithful disciples of Christ, we must never allow our commercial, secular culture to distract us with talk of "shopping days" and "holidays". Advent reminds us that we are preparing for Holy Days.

Please keep the Good News of our Savior first and foremost in your mind and heart in the weeks ahead. Imitate His love for the poor by remembering those most in need among us by supporting our 34th Annual Diocesan Christmas Collection which will be taken up at our Christmas Eucharistic celebrations. One-hundred per cent (100%) of the money collected through this fund stays in our Diocese to help people in need with emergency utility assistance, shelter, food, transportation and countless other forms of crisis aid.

The funds are administered by Catholic Urban Programs (CUP) in East St. Louis; however, please remember that *any pastor, parish administrator or parish life coordinator from any parish in the Diocese can appeal to this fund on behalf of needy people in their community.* They need only contact CUP at 618-398-5616 for assistance. Last Christmas our people generously donated \$93,082 which has been expended to meet the needs of the poor from throughout our Belleville Diocese. It goes without saying that our Annual Diocesan Christmas Collection has been a much-needed source of help for many.

Envelopes for this special collection are in your regular envelope packet. The collection will be taken up at all Masses on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

We are very much aware that with the current economy this has again been a difficult year for many and we ask that you give as you are able. In the name of all who will benefit from your generosity and in my own name, I express profound gratitude. Please pray for me as I will pray for you and your loved ones as we prepare to celebrate the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God.

Sincerely and gratefully yours in Christ,

+ Edward K. Braxton

The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton
Bishop of Belleville