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Q & A: Father Larry Snyder of Catholic Charities

Michael Sean Winters | Oct. 29, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

This week, noting both the new report on the Catholic Campaign for Human Devlopment and the fact that Catholic Charities has just finished celebrating its centennial, we have been focusing on what is distinctive about Catholic charitable work.

We finish, apporpriately, with an excerpt from the speech Fr. Larry Snyder, CEO and President of Catholic Charities USA, gave to the centennial gala. Please consider going to their website [1]and helping them with their important work by making a contribution.

Father Synder: We need to ask ourselves the question of where Catholic Charities will stand as these solutions are brought forward. I would propose that since our inception, Catholic Charities has been immersed in the ?messiness? of life. The people who look to us for support and hope are dealing with personal challenges and systemic failures. And so our solutions cannot be antiseptic. They must recognize the complexity of human nature and emulate the ministry of Jesus who readily reached out to those that no one else would touch. No matter how well disguised it may be, we still must see the beauty and the image and likeness of God in every person who comes through our doors. Individual situations are not always pretty; more often than not they will be messy. But we must approach them with reverence and see them as holding the possibility of grace.

This is not the time to be timid about our faith; it is the time to be bold in our action. As I look at all of you gathered here today, I know that the age of visionaries and giants is still among us. In the last five years I have visited many agencies and can attest to the incredible work that is being done across this country. This can certainly be attributed to your dedication to the highest standards of professionalism; but more importantly I know it is because your work is rooted in your faith and is an expression of the values you hold dear. You are the hands of Christ to so many; you express the unconditional love of God to a hurting and hungry world.

Archbishop John Ireland was a leader in my home archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis through the turn of the twentieth century. On the occasion of the centennial of the establishment of the hierarchy in the United States in 1889, he addressed the country?s bishops. After an earlier speaker had pointed out the wonderful things accomplished in the first one hundred years, Archbishop Ireland said:

> I bid you turn to the future. It has special significance for us. The past our fathers wrought; the future will be wrought by us. The next century...will be what we make it. It will be our own, the work of our labors.
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> O for a prophet?s eye to glance down the unborn years, and from now to read the story...as generations a hundred years hence may read it. But no prophet?s eye is needed. As we will it, so shall the story be.

My friends, I could not end with truer words: as we will it, so shall the future be.

If we believe and work for this, then we can proclaim to the poor and downtrodden that this is truly: a new day, a new hope, a new way.

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Links:
[1] http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/NetCommunity/