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Bishop McClory Embraces Call to Love the Poor

Dilexi te: Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Leo XIV on Love for the Poor

MERRILLVILLE – On October 4, 2025, Pope Leo XIV signed the first Apostolic Exhortation of his Pontificate, entitled ***Dilexi te*** (“I have loved you”), focused on love for the poor. In *Dilexi te*, Pope Leo emphasizes the importance of the Church’s pastoral commitment throughout tradition and today, to follow Christ’s teaching and example to love and care for the poor. The document notes the Church’s love for the poor in scripture, tradition, Church teaching and pastoral practice. It encourages greater listening to the cry of the poor amidst the great crises of our time, to encounter them, to walk with them. Through it, the pope suggests that the very mission of the Church, as well as personal and communal responses, is made clearer and stronger.

In response to *Dilexi te*, Bishop Robert J. McClory, Diocese of Gary, was quick to affirm Pope Leo’s call to love the poor and, in turn, be loved by the very poor we serve: “Pope Leo’s encyclical reminds us that Christ himself is revealed in the poor. Our love for the poor is love for Christ. All of us are called to respond to this call.”

Bishop McClory drew attention to this concluding passage in Pope Leo’s encyclical: “Christian love breaks down every barrier, brings close those who were distant, unites strangers, and reconciles enemies. ... By its very nature, Christian love is prophetic: it works miracles and knows no limits. It makes what was apparently impossible happen. ... A Church that sets no limits to love, that knows no enemies to fight but only men and women to love, is the Church that the world needs today.” (Delixit Nos, 120)

Pope Leo draws attention to the many religious communities of men and women in the Church who serve the poor, including those communities with a strong history in the Diocese of Gary. Bishop McClory added his endorsement and recognition of the numerous people, religious orders and organizations in the diocese who are devoted to serving the poor and vulnerable in Northwest Indiana communities.

For 25 years, “The Missionaries of Charity have been a beacon of light bringing the love of Christ to the heart of Gary,” said Bishop McClory. “They meet the material needs of the people with shelter, food and especially by working with children,” the bishop added. “They love the people of Northwest Indiana.”

Several religious communities directly serve the poor and vulnerable, especially in the greater Gary community, including the Missionaries of Charity, the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, and the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscan Friars), who also pastorally minister in the four Gary churches. The Albertine Sisters, following in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, lovingly care for the elderly in a live-in senior care facility in Hammond.

There are 22 chapters of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, located in parishes throughout the four counties served by the Diocese of Gary. The mission of the Vincentians is “as a network of friends, inspired by Gospel values, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need.” The men and women of this Catholic lay organization offer person-to-person service to

those who are needy and suffering. Annually, they faithfully serve more than 5 million people in rural, suburban, and urban communities across the United States.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration and other Franciscan congregations founded and continue to guide the Franciscan Health system with a mission of compassionate healthcare and community service rooted in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. These consecrated women provide healthcare, education, and social services with a special emphasis on treating the marginalized and promoting health and hope in the communities they serve.

The parishes and schools within the diocese share in this commitment to serving others with love. The school curriculum incorporates Catholic values, emphasizing with service to others and the community. Parish ministries offer diverse ways to assist those in need, including food pantries, thrift stores, and soup kitchens, to name a few.

Partner organizations, such as Catholic Charities and the Catholic Foundation of Northwest Indiana, make resources available to support those in need of assistance.

The annual Day of Service is coordinated through the Diocese of Gary's office of missionary discipleship and evangelization. The day begins with the celebration of Mass at the Cathedral of the Holy Angels to prepare the faithful to go out as the hands and feet of Christ to serve others with love. Some of the charitable organizations that partner with the diocese for this event include the *Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ*, *Missionary of Charity Sisters*, *St. Monica and St. Luke Food Pantry*, *Catholic Cemeteries*, and *Gary's senior housing facilities*.

"We must care for one another with love," Bishop McClory said. "In the Gary diocese, we are blessed by the gift of many dedicated organizations, religious and lay faithful to joyfully share the love of Christ, especially to minister to those in the greatest need."

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About the Diocese of Gary

The Diocese of Gary serves an estimated 170,000 Catholics in Lake, Porter, LaPorte and Starke counties through 53 parishes, two missions, one Catholic student center, three diocesan high schools, one private high school, one diocesan elementary school and 16 parish elementary schools that serve 6,318 students. An additional 5,271 students are enrolled in parish Catholic formation programs. More than two million are served by Catholic affiliated agencies, including seven Catholic hospitals, residential and day care facilities for adults and children, and centers for Social Services.