

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The theme for the 2010 Bishop's Lenten Appeal (BLA), *Charity is Faith in Action*, brings to mind a basic teaching of our Catholic faith, namely, that authentic faith necessarily results in good deeds. When we demonstrate our love and care for our neighbors, we bring hope to those whose lives may bear the burden of suffering or hopelessness. The BLA unites all of the parishes in our diocese, so collectively we can address the many spiritual, social, educational and charitable concerns of our diocesan Church.

By participating in the BLA, we are making God's loving presence real in many lives across the Diocese of Arlington. The BLA funds core diocesan programs such as: Catholic Schools and Religious Education, Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Catholic Charities and the Office for Family Life, along with evangelization efforts and a variety of ministries within the parishes that make up our diocesan Church. Additionally, through the BLA, we show our support for those who have given their lives in service to the Church, from encouraging and fostering new vocations to caring for our retired priests and religious.

Pope Benedict XVI has dedicated this year as the Year for Priests and declared Saint John Vianney the Universal Patron of Priests on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his death. Saint John Vianney spent most of his ordained life as a parish priest in the small town of Ars, France. He performed countless works of charity in his life, including healing the sick and establishing a much-needed orphanage for girls. He delighted in teaching children their catechism and sometimes spent up to 16 hours a day hearing confessions. After ten years under his pastoral guidance, the town of Ars had experienced an astounding transformation. The townspeople were irresistibly drawn by the grace which radiated from this virtuous and zealous priest, so that Saint John Vianney was able to convert the hearts of everyone in the town.

As a parish priest, Saint John Vianney lived a simple, austere life and many of his writings and homilies expressed his ardent appreciation for the gifts he received from God. He wrote, "*To love the good God with our whole strength is to employ our possessions, our health, and our talents, in serving Him and glorifying Him.*" In a similar way, I am asking you to offer your gratitude to God through your support to the 2010 BLA.

When faced with a crisis, the Church family does what other families do. We pull together and we share with those most in need. Last year, I witnessed an outpouring of sharing, coupled with sacrifice, of so many people in our diocese. I am deeply touched that many of you came forward with generous support to assist the ministries and programs in our diocesan Church. These difficult economic times serve to remind us of how essential the outreach of our Church is to our lives and those of our brothers and sisters. Through your pledge to the 2010 BLA, you are ensuring that these services will continue to support and nurture our diocesan community.

Therefore, with a shepherd's heart, I appeal to you to participate in this year's Bishop's Lenten Appeal, with the same humble devotion to charity and ministry that Saint John Vianney demonstrated. Like this great Patron of Priests and model of 'Faith in Action,' may we all strive to give renewed hope to everyone we encounter through our acts of charity and love. Truly, *Charity is Faith in Action!*

Faithfully in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul S. Loverde". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde
Bishop of Arlington