It has been my joy and honor to be the Director of the Pro-Life Apostolate and Project Rachel for the last 12 years and to have served this ministry, in the Diocese of Fall River, for a total of 24 years. I am grateful to those who support the yearly Catholic Charities Appeal. Without you, my ministry would not be possible. I would like to share some insight with you on one aspect of the ministry.

A few years ago I was contacted by a young woman whose friend was contemplating abortion. Her voice was frantic, the appointment had been made and she had exhausted all of her words and resources to discourage her friend from taking this road. She asked if I would be willing to speak with her. Of course but I would need her friend’s permission to call her. After my preface of prayer for the Holy Spirit and a few minutes of silence, her friend agreed to make this contact.

When she answered, her voice was weak and she had just finished high school and was about to begin her freshman year of college. The call would not be possible tomorrow because, to her, she had no child father and she was afraid for the future. She described her need, her guilt, and her pain. I was so grateful to everyone who answered, the meeting was set. I encouraged Father, fervently ...who I would ask to speak with her? Prayer answered, the meeting was set. “Thank you, Father. Thank you, Holy Spirit.” I included her face in my heart and I was about to launch my final words to her. Without consciously choosing these words, I heard myself ask, “Would you be willing to speak to a Catholic priest?” Profound silence. I was so grateful to everyone who answered, the meeting was set. I encouraged Father, fervently ...who I would ask to speak with her? Prayer answered, the meeting was set. “Thank you, Father. Thank you, Holy Spirit.” I included her face in my heart and I was about to launch my final words to her. Without consciously choosing these words, I heard myself ask, “Would you be willing to speak to a Catholic priest?” Profound silence. I was so grateful to everyone who answered, the meeting was set. I encouraged Father, fervently ...who I would ask to speak with her? Prayer answered, the meeting was set. “Thank you, Father. Thank you, Holy Spirit.” I included her face in my heart and I was about to launch my final words to her. Without consciously choosing these words, I heard myself ask, “Would you be willing to speak to a Catholic priest?” Profound silence. I was so grateful to everyone who answered, the meeting was set. I encouraged Father, fervently ...who I would ask to speak with her? Prayer answered, the meeting was set. “Thank you, Father. Thank you, Holy Spirit.” I included her face in my heart and I was about to launch my final words to her. Without consciously choosing these words, I heard myself ask, “Would you be willing to speak to a Catholic priest?” Profound silence. I was so grateful to everyone who answered, the meeting was set. I encouraged Father, fervently ...who I would ask to speak with her? Prayer answered, the meeting was set. “Thank you, Father. Thank you, Holy Spirit.” I included her face in my heart and I was about to launch my final words to her. Without consciously choosing these words, I heard myself ask, “Would you be willing to speak to a Catholic priest?” Profound silence. I was so grateful to everyone who answered, the meeting was set. I encouraged Father, fervently ...who I would ask to speak with her? Prayer answered, the meeting was set. “Thank you, Father. Thank you, Holy Spirit.” I included her face in my heart and I was about to launch my final words to her. Without consciously choosing these words, I heard myself ask, “Would you be willing to speak to a Catholic priest?” Profound silence. I was so grateful to everyone who answered, the meeting was set. I encouraged Father, fervently ...who I would ask to speak with her? Prayer answered, the meeting was set. “Thank you, Father. Thank you, Holy Spirit.” I included her face in my heart and I was about to launch my final words to her. Without consciously choosing these words, I heard myself ask, “Would you be willing to speak to a Catholic priest?” Profound silence. I was so grateful to everyone who answered, the meeting was set. I encouraged Father, fervently ...who I would ask to speak with her? Prayer answered, the meeting was set. “Thank you, Father. Thank you, Holy Spirit.” I included her face in my heart and I was about to launch my final words to her. Without consciously choosing these words, I heard myself ask, “Would you be willing to speak to a Catholic priest?” Profound silence. I was so grateful to everyone who answered, the meeting was set. I encouraged Father, fervently ...who I would ask to speak with her? Prayer answered, the meeting was set. “Thank you, Father. Thank you, Holy Spirit.”

It’s much more than a semantic difference. It is our call to always be ready to serve. I hope you do not see the Catholic Charities Appeal as a burden to any of us, rather an opportunity to pray and give thanks, to share your gifts with others, and to serve one another. Please know that I appreciate all that you do in your parishes to make the Gospel come alive to the young, the elderly, the poor, and those whose circumstances have left them in need of Christ’s solicitude. This year for the first time we include the ministry of care for our retired and disabled priests as a component of the Appeal.

As stated in my Pastoral Letter of Easter, we are rebuilding our Diocese in Faith and Hope. We need all of us to do our part, through prayer and sacrificial contributions to create the vibrant and joyful parishes and schools that will draw souls to Christ.

May God Bless you and your loved ones.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Rev. Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D., Bishop of Fall River
The word “lit” has become a term of art in social media culture. If something or someone is “lit” they are cool, hip or novel. I would like to share with you the work of a remarkable group of students at Holy Name School in Fall River who have been lit by LIT.

LIT is an acronym for Leaders in Training. It is the idea of an extraordinary college senior, Dorothy Mahoney Pacheco, who has been spending a portion of her senior year volunteering at Holy Name along with Aidan Corey a senior at Bishop Connolly and taking a course in Catholic Leadership.

The LIT team took it upon themselves to learn about homelessness in their midst. They scheduled a visit to a local shelter; they met and learned about the circumstances that bring a family to homelessness.

Upon returning from their visit these young leaders in training had many questions. Principal among them was “What can we do for them?” The same question was “What can we do to help?” The same question was “What can we do for the least of our brothers and sisters?” The same question was “What can we do in this situation to help?” The same question was “What can we do for them, you do for me. As you would expect from young leaders in training they started “Backpacks to Learn and Grow.” She has set a goal of filling 250 backpacks for the children of families living in shelters or transitional housing through Catholic Social Services so that when they return to school in September, they will have all the appropriate resources and follow through with them.

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One day this past March I was invited to meet the class along with Nancy Lawson, the director of homeless services for Catholic Social Services. I listened as Nancy gave a beautiful talk about the depth and breadth of ways we as Church respond to the needs of young adults, older men and women and families who are homeless.

Upon returning from their visit these young leaders in training had many questions. Principal among them was “What can we do for them?” The same question was “What can we do to help?” The same question was “What can we do for the least of our brothers and sisters?” The same question was “What can we do in this situation to help?” The same question was “What can we do for them, you do for me. As you would expect from young leaders in training they started “Backpacks to Learn and Grow.” She has set a goal of filling 250 backpacks for the children of families living in shelters or transitional housing through Catholic Social Services so that when they return to school in September, they will have all the appropriate resources and follow through with them.

In a short time both the town councilor and Police Chief were moved to comment on the positive changes that the Chaplains are available. They’re really dealing with the underlying problem and not just the portion that will help us in the short time that Catholic Social Services has taken over the area. They’re really dealing with the problem and not just putting a Band-Aid on things.

The Barnstable Police Department has been dealing with a homeless population for more than 30 years in the community and for a short time that Catholic Social Services has taken over the area, we are truly, truly impressed with the progress they’ve made and we really appreciate it.”

Jennifer L. Cullum, Barnstable Town Councilor; Chief MacDonald, Barnstable Police Chief.

"It’s a work in progress and I’m happy to be here. I firmly believe that we are making a difference here and in making a difference for them, I’m proud of the panorama of care that our faith impels us to engage in. It left me determined to help Isabella fill those backpacks. It left me in awe of the drive and commitment of these young leaders to help those who are hungry in our midst. It left me hopeful for our future with people like Dorothy and Aidan coming along to assume the mantle of leadership for our society. In short, it left me LIT!"
It has been my joy and honor to be the Director of the Pro-Life Apostolate and Project Rachel for the past 12 years and to have served this ministry, in the Fall River Diocese, for a total of 24 years. I am most grateful to those who support the Catholic Charities Appeal. Without you, this ministry would not be possible. I would like to share some insight with you on one aspect of this ministry.

For many years I was contacted by a young woman whose friend was considering an abortion. Her voice was faint, the conversation had been made and she had already decided all of this. I felt no reason to resources and encourage her friend to take this road.

She asked if I would be willing to speak with Her. Of course but I would first need her friend’s permission to call. After my partnership of prayer, the Holy Spirit and a few hours of silence waiting, her friend agreed to accept my call.

When she asked, I shared with her what happened in the ministry and she was done talking about it. But now, a sign of her decision was made, it was final, and the seed was planted. I was so grateful to everyone who through us and sacrifice a little for a friend in need.

All our lives...we just must be willing to let Him work through us and sacrifice a little for a friend in need.

His generosity and ability to profoundly change lives.

My dear brothers and sisters: I am so pleased to share with you this special Sharing which contains information about some of our ministries that are supported by the 2017 Catholic Charities Appeal and a report on the usage of last year’s funds.

We have a proud history of serving the poor and the needy in our Diocese in good times and in hard times.

As I stated in my Pastoral Letter at Easter, we are Rebuilding our Diocese in Faith and Hope. We need all of us to do our part, through proper and sacrificial contributions to create the vibrant and joyous parishes and communities that are supported by the 2017 Catholic Charities Appeal.

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LIT by Love of God and Neighbor

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The LIT team took it upon themselves to learn about homelessness in their midst. They scheduled a visit to a local shelter; they met and learned about the circumstances that bring a family to homelessness. Upon returning from their visit these young leaders in training had many questions. Principal among them was “What can we do to help?” The same question we ask ourselves in response to Jesus’ charge to the Apostles questioning “When did we see you hungry or thirsty?” The answer? “Whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me.” As you would expect from young adults, older men and women and families who are homeless.

Nancy answered questions about how homelessness happens, explaining that unexpected loss, mental illness, loss of a job or substance abuse are all causes that may result in need for shelter. She said that CSS is prepared to meet the person or family, assess their needs, coordinate the appropriate resources and follow through with them.

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Our cards are a welcome reminder to patients that are away from their rooms that the Chaplains are available. We greatly appreciate the support of Catholic Charities donors towards our ministry of care for the sick.

LIT Leaders in Training

Earlier this year Catholic Social Services took over the administration of a shelter downtown Hyannis. In a short time both the town councilor and Police Chief were moved to comment on the positive changes to the program.

“People here really, genuinely advocate for the community needs and allowing this shelter can be a community partner. They’re really dealing with the underlying problems and not just putting a Band-Aid on things.”

Jennifer L. Cullum, Barnstable Town Councilor

“I just want to say thank you everyone involved in this mission of helping someone in need. That’s what the Church is all about.”

Bishop da Cunha

My brother priests and I are sincerely grateful for your support, not just the portion that will help us in our retirement but for the majority of the funds which help thousands of people in need. Please be assured of our continuing prayers of gratitude.

Monsignor Thomas J. Harrington

The Barnstable Police Department has been dealing with homelessness for more than 30 years in the community and just at the short time that Catholic Social Services has taken it over we have seen dramatic changes. Both in the appearance of the building and the way homeless people are treated on the street. We are truly, truly impressed with the preparedness of the staff and the staff really open to it.”

Chief Mac Donald, Barnstable Police Chief

April 19, 2017

The Anchor columnist James Campbell is director of the Diocesan Development Office/Catholic Charities Appeal to Advance Catholic Education.

The Cape Cod Times, April 19, 2017

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One staff member of Catholic Social Services, Dorothy Mahoney, shared with us some data about the homeless population they serve.

The LIT team asked the question: “How can we help?” Dorothy answered questions about how homelessness happens, explaining that unexpected loss, mental illness, loss of a job or substance abuse are all causes that may result in need for shelter. She said that CSS is positioned to meet the person or family, assess their needs, coordinate the appropriate resources and follow through with them.

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Father Jason Brilhante
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She asked if I would be willing to speak with her. Of course but I wanted her friend to have the permission to call her. After my pattern of prayer the Holy Spirit and a few hours of anxious waiting, I felt foolish, she had told me she was not a Catholic. Then, the most incredible response of “yes” answered, the meeting was set. I encouraged Father, fervently...who I would ask to speak with her? Prayer put that phrase in the present tense, for today and tomorrow. Therefore our call is “Whatsoever you do…”

Our theme this year is taken from the Gospel of Matthew, wherein Jesus tells his disciples that whatsoever they did unto one of the least of these, he would do unto them. Please know that I appreciate all that you do in your parishes to make the Gospel come alive to the young, the elderly, the poor, and those whose circumstances have left them in need of Christ’s solace. This year for the first time we include the ministry of care for our retired and disabled priests as a component of the Appeal.

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