STRENGTHENING THE CHURCH AT HOME

Dear Diocesan Director,

The Catholic Home Missions Appeal supports dioceses in the United States and its territories that lack the resources to provide basic pastoral ministry to their populations. Through annual grants, Catholic Home Missions funds catechesis, seminarian education, Hispanic ministry, and other pastoral programs in needy dioceses. As a result of parishioners' generosity, Catholic Home Missions impacts the lives of nearly 9 million Catholics. The dioceses funded by the Appeal comprise nearly 45 percent of all U.S. dioceses.

The state of Mississippi has the highest number of families living below the poverty line in the U.S., as well as the lowest per capita income and a low level of formal education. For the **Diocese of Jackson**, these challenges are combined with an immense area—the diocese encompasses two-thirds of the state—and only a small number of Catholics. One of the biggest problems is a lack of priests who can reach people under these difficult circumstances. The head of the diocese, Bishop Joseph N. Latino, commented on this shortage, "I've buried more priests than I've ordained in my 10 years of tenure." With limited resources, this reality hits this home mission diocese hard. A grant from Catholic Home Missions helps cover the cost of educating the diocese's 10 seminarians, whose education each costs $35,000–$37,000 per year. As future priests of the diocese, these men will bring the sacraments and provide a Catholic presence to the faithful.

You can make this year's Appeal successful by encouraging parishes to use the posters, fliers, and bulletin announcements provided. **The most important key to success is having your pastors speak about the Appeal from the pulpit.** Additional materials are available at *www.usccb.org* (search "home missions resources"). The national date for the Catholic Home Missions Appeal is **the weekend of April 26–27**, though your (arch)diocese may schedule it at a different time.

For more information please contact me at 202-541-3365 or *bkennedy@usccb.org*. We truly appreciate your support of the Catholic Home Missions Appeal and helping to **strengthen the Church at home**.

With gratitude,

Bevin Kennedy

Assistant Director, Promotions, Office of National Collections

For more information on the Catholic Home Missions Appeal and the dioceses it funds, please visit *www.usccb.org* (search "home missions").

CATHOLIC HOME MISSIONS APPEAL

OFFICE OF NATIONAL COLLECTIONS

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON, DC 20017-1194

202-541-3400 • FAX 202-541-3460 • WWW.USCCB.ORG/NATIONALCOLLECTIONS

CATHOLIC HOME MISSIONS APPEAL

Strengthening the Church at Home