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[crs.org](http://crs.org) / [crsespanol.org](http://crsespanol.org)

January 22, 2021

Dear Brother Bishops:

This Lent provides us with a unique opportunity to turn to God in the midst of the pandemic, economic challenges, and pastoral needs. We at Catholic Relief Services invite Catholics to join us in prayer, sacrifice, and almsgiving through CRS Rice Bowl.

Every Lent, certain provocateurs spread false allegations about CRS in order to disrupt the CRS Rice Bowl Lenten program and do their own fundraising. These allegations are not new and rely on misleading interpretations, inaccurate information, or innuendo. I am saddened that these individuals and groups associated with them continue to launch these divisive and misleading attacks. During this Lent, you may receive inquiries from parishioners or others in your community about these sorts of unfounded claims.

I write to re-assure you of CRS's commitment to Catholic teaching and our rigorous decision-making process for our programming. CRS is a Pro-Life organization motivated by the Gospel to bring Christ's love to the poor and vulnerable. Under my Board Chairmanship, CRS will continue to uphold Catholic teaching in everything we do. We have established robust training and vetting systems with the assistance of the USCCB Committees on Pro-Life Activities and Doctrine, the National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC), and other theologians and experts. We rigorously monitor and review our relationships with other organizations and our activities and programs to ensure that we are faithful to and fully live out our Catholic identity. A new Board Catholic Identity Committee, comprising Board Bishops, faithful lay Board members and CRS executive staff, provides additional guidance on programs and partnerships, as well as celebrates and promotes our Catholic Identity.

Similar past attacks a few years ago prompted the USCCB's Administrative Committee to issue a statement affirming its full support for CRS and declaring that these critics "**do not speak for the Catholic Church.**" Over the years, CRS Bishop board members, accompanied by members of the NCBC and CRS executive team, have sought to explain our work to these detractors. We have concluded that they are not interested in fraternal dialogue. Rather, responding directly to their false allegations only provides more material they misinterpret, twist, or mischaracterize.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me or Roberto Navarro ([Roberto.Navarro@crs.org](mailto:Roberto.Navarro@crs.org)) at CRS if you ever need assistance in responding to parishioners with heartfelt concerns. In the meantime, you may also direct those with inquiries to our website for information on how CRS consistently upholds our Catholic values and identity.

We pray this Lenten season will be a time of conversion of hearts and minds, that we may grow in charity and be constant in prayer.

Faternally yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Frank J. Caggiano'.

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano  
Bishop of Bridgeport  
Chair, CRS Board of Directors

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