

Sample Speech for ShareLife Volunteers

Length: 7 minutes

“It’s overwhelmingly people of faith who run shelters and food banks, help refugees begin a new life, lobby governments for affordable housing, reach out to the ill and the abandoned.”

These words from Cardinal Collins speak to the way that we as a Catholic community have extended Gospel values not only to people in need across our archdiocese, but also around the world. There are many examples of how we have been active in the social service infrastructure of the archdiocese since the 1850’s, when Bishop de Charbonnel invited the Sisters of St. Joseph to establish what is now Providence Healthcare. Rosalie Hall, Covenant House, the Daily Bread Food Bank and the Furniture Bank, St. Michael’s Hospital, the Good Shepherd Centre – these and many more services that are part of the everyday life of our society trace their roots to the involvement of the Catholic Church. In addition, our parish communities sponsor food banks and out of the cold programs that provide assistance to those in need of a meal or a place to stay. We are truly a faith community that acts and lives out the Gospel message in all that we do.

In 1976, Archbishop Pocock established the ShareLife campaign, based on a decision of conscience, standing up for what we believe as a Catholic community. Beginning with 8 agencies, today there are 43 agencies that receive support from our annual appeal. Families in crisis, people with special needs, the elderly, immigrants and refugees, and children and youth turn to a ShareLife funded agency for help. In addition, we provide for the education of our priests and deacons at St. Augustine’s and Redemptoris Mater Missionary seminaries, as well as the Office for Vocations, support programs for youth and youth ministers through the Office for Catholic Youth, and provide for the work of the church in the greater world through the Pastoral Mission Fund, Development and Peace, Mary’s Meals and Canadian Food for Children. Making a contribution to our annual appeal is more than a financial transaction – it is how we support the mission work of the church that is taking place every day across our archdiocese, and around the world.

There are many stories of how ShareLife’s support is making a difference, and I’d like to share one of them with you today. St. Michael’s Homes is an agency providing supportive housing and treatment programs for men suffering from addictions.

Here is the story of Alex, who describes his challenges in life this way: “I’m an alcoholic and an addict, but my problem is Alex.” His started drinking alcohol at the age of ten, and by fourteen was introduced to cocaine. Despite these addiction challenges, he graduated from high school, attended college, and found a job that he was passionate about.

Everything changed the day that one of his clients passed away. Alex started to use harder substances to help escape reality. His marriage broke down, and he had custody of his son. Alex found every means to support not only his son, but also his addictions.

One day, Alex realized that he did not recognize himself in the mirror, and noticed the way his son was looking at him. He realized that his addiction was not only killing him, but also the son he loved. He turned to God for help, and entered the programs at St. Michael’s Homes, where he has completed the treatment program and entered transitional housing. He participates in

addiction support groups to help others with their recovery, and has been there for his family through health challenges, which would not have been possible in his previous state.

Last year 566 men received support from St. Michael's Homes. Their supportive housing program helps men suffering with addictions to rebuild their lives and maintain stable housing. Many of these men have faced homelessness and/or institutionalization, and seek a supportive environment where they can maintain abstinence while rebuilding their lives, help them to restore connections with their family, and return to independent living. They recently added an out patient pre-residential service allowing men waiting for treatment to access individual and group care, which has led to an increased number of clients, especially those with high complexity issues, being served in a stable funding environment.

This is but one example of how our support for ShareLife is making a difference. As I read this story, all I could think of was the way that Alex's young son looked at this father, and how this helped to move him in the right direction in life. When he needed help, the Catholic community was there for him through our ShareLife campaign, and this is but one of the many ways that we bring the Gospel value to love one another as I have loved you to life.

Today, I invite you to join Cardinal Collins, our Bishops, our clergy and your fellow parishioners across the archdiocese to help support the programs at St. Michael's Homes, and the 43 agencies supported through our campaign, by making a sacrificial gift toward the 2020 ShareLife parish campaign. Our goal at [*parish name*] parish is \$[*goal amount*], which is part of our \$13.8 million overall parish campaign goal. In addition to providing for the current programs and services at our agencies, Catholic Charities has identified palliative care education, providing resources and information on this important subject at a time in society where assisted suicide is growing in acceptance, and the expansion of our seniors program, which pairs isolated seniors with a volunteer at the parish to provide individual support as well as participation in group activities, as new programs that will require additional funding. In order to implement these programs, and to provide for the increased demands for service that our agencies face, it is important that we maintain and increase our support for ShareLife. If you have already made a contribution we thank you for doing so, and we invite those who have not to do so when the next collection takes place on the weekend of [*collection date*]. Envelopes are available in the pews.

Thank you again for allowing me to be here today, and I'll be at the back of the church after Mass to answer any questions that you may have. I would like to conclude with a statement from Alex on how the programs at our agency have impacted his life. He says, "St. Michael's Homes saved my life. They gave me a second chance and I've been doing everything I can to use it. I want to be abstinent. I've been given an opportunity to turn my life around and make it worth living and I'm taking full advantage. The staff here are like my family. They've supported me and helped me."

As Cardinal Collins noted, it is people of faith who bring these program for life, and through ShareLife, with our support, we are bringing the hands of Christ to people like Alex and the many others who turn to our agencies on a daily basis for help.

Thank you.