



Archdiocese  
of Toronto

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**MEDIA RELEASE – For Immediate Release**

## **“For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food” – Catholic Community Pledges Half Million Dollars to Fight Crisis**

TORONTO (September 6, 2023) – As an increasing number of people struggle to put food on the table, the Catholic community is drawing upon its legacy of service to tackle this contemporary crisis.

ShareLife, the annual charitable appeal of the Archdiocese of Toronto, is committing over a half million dollars to the fight against hunger through Food Security Grants. The funding consists of three pillars:

- \$250,000 in new funding to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Toronto Central Council, which will distribute grants to parish-based food banks and meal programs.
- \$150,000 in new funding to Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto, which will distribute grants to agency-run food programs.
- \$120,000 already allocated to Catholic Charities for food-related programs through its member agencies. Funding for some of these programs began in November 2022.

ShareLife initiated the Food Security Grants commitment in response to the surging demand for support witnessed by government, charities, and parish communities. Year-over-year grocery cost increases of 10% or more (as documented by StatsCan) are forcing many families to turn for help for the first time – one in seven food bank users are employed. Those already struggling are being pushed further into poverty, as Food Banks Canada reported a 16% increase in food bank usage in 2022 over the previous year. A staggering 5.8 million people in Ontario (16.1% of households) experienced food insecurity according to a 2021 study.

Agencies [may apply for funding](#) through Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Toronto Central Council is [accepting applications for funding](#) from Catholic parishes. Please review the linked documents for further details.

"It is heart-wrenching and unacceptable that anyone in our city today lacks access to food which is a most basic human right," says Archbishop Francis Leo. "Our parishioners are taking action in response to the Lord's call to feed the hungry. Since the earliest days of the Catholic

community in the Archdiocese of Toronto, the faithful have cared for those in need, on the margins of society and we continue this life-giving legacy.”

“We see our neighbours in need increasingly struggle with food insecurity,” adds Louise Coutu, Executive Director of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Toronto Central Council. “As part of our mission of ‘turning concern into action,’ we are ready to assist with the expansion of parish-based food and meal programs through this bold initiative.”

“Those in hunger cannot wait for the systemic causes of food insecurity to be solved before we take action,” says Dr. Agnes Thomas, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto. “By working with member agencies and other partners already on the ground, we are making an immediate impact in the lives of the most vulnerable.”

ShareLife funds over 40 agencies and grant recipients through the annual \$13.8 million Parish Campaign. Since its founding in 1976, ShareLife has united Catholic parishes, schools, and the corporate community in its mission of “living the Gospel by providing for those in need.”

Catholics across the Archdiocese of Toronto are rallying together to support the annual \$13.8 million ShareLife Parish Campaign. Members of 225 parishes are raising funds with renewed vigor, as ShareLife takes bold action to tackle food insecurity.

The Archdiocese of Toronto, Canada’s largest diocese, is one of the most diverse faith communities in North America, serving as the spiritual home to approximately two million Catholics with close to 400 priests celebrating Mass in more than 30 languages each week at 225 parishes. The archdiocese stretches from Toronto north to Georgian Bay and from Oshawa to Mississauga.

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