

*"I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed
me, I was naked and you clothed me,
I was sick and you visited me,
I was in prison and you came to me."*

Matthew 25:35-36

In 1931 four Miami-area pastors and lay members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society answered the gospel mandate to care for the poor and vulnerable. They founded what is today, the largest non-governmental provider of social services in South Florida. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami, Inc. with an annual budget that exceeds \$20 million, has surpassed the expectations of its Great Depression era founders.

On March 8, 1931, the Associated Catholic Charities was formally established in Miami and named the Catholic Welfare Bureau. From the beginning, the agency's focus was to restore the dignity of people who were poor and vulnerable and help them return to self-sufficiency. They collaborated with other social service agencies to address the needs of Miami's growing population, which by 1940 had grown to almost two million. The most pressing needs at the time included: family problems, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, juvenile delinquency, immigrants threatened with deportation, and children needing foster care.

In 1958, The Most Rev. Coleman F. Carroll was installed as the first bishop of the newly established Diocese of Miami. He appointed Fr. Bryan O. Walsh as Director of Catholic Charities. Fr. Walsh envisioned the future of the Church's social development work as a partnership among voluntary and public social service agencies. The agency had a staff of eleven at the time, and a budget of \$100,000.

In 1959, Centro Hispano Catolico, housed in the Gesu Parish School building, became the hub of social services for newly arrived Cuban refugees. Concerned about unaccompanied children the Diocese, led by Fr. Walsh, helped to establish the Cuban Children's Program. A coordinated effort of 110 Catholic Charities' agencies in 35 states provided temporary foster care in family and group homes. "Operation Pedro Pan," as it was nicknamed, was the largest airlift of unaccompanied children in the history of the United States. Over 14,000 unaccompanied children were sponsored into the U.S.A.

*"Continue to welcome the
immigrants ... to share
their joys and hopes, to
support them in their
sorrow and trials, and to
help them flourish... This
is what your fellow
countrymen have done for
generations."*

Pope Benedict XVI

By 1964, the Catholic Welfare Bureau was the second largest child welfare and care agency in the United States. In 1966, the agency's name was changed from Catholic Welfare Bureau to Catholic Service Bureau. The early 1970's were a boom time for opening new programs. St. Luke's Methadone Clinic opened in 1970, followed by a

child care center at St. Luke's, providing services especially designed for children whose parents were substance abusers. Other programs included: Genesis in South Dade, a residential program for drug addicts; Ozanam, a half-way home for ex-offenders; Bethesda Manor, a half-way house for alcoholics; the Miami Bridge, a home for runaway teenagers; St. Vincent Outreach, a non-residential program especially for unwed mothers.

*“Train up a child
in the way he
should go, and
when he is old
he will not
depart from it.”*

Proverbs 22:6

Several day care centers were opened in Miami-Dade County to provide quality child care services for low income parents. In 1968, Good Shepherd Child Care Center opened in South Dade. In the mid-70's Centro Mater and Centro Hispano, which were only informally affiliated with the Bureau, were incorporated under the umbrella of the agency. In 1975, Notre Dame in Little Haiti opened, followed by Sagrada Familia Child Care Center in Little Havana in 1979. More childcare centers opened in the '90s with Centro Mater West in Hialeah, in 1996, and South Dade Child Care Center in 1997.

The period of 1975 to 1985 saw the expansion of Broward County services which expanded to a staff of over 100 and a budget of \$2.5 million. In 1985, the first adult day care center opened a novel idea at the time. Genesis residence opened in 1988 to provide comprehensive care to thirty homeless persons with AIDS. At the time it was the only shelter in Miami-Dade County to assist homeless people with AIDS. In 1995, Monsignor Walsh stepped down as Executive Director of the Catholic Service Bureau and Monsignor Thomas Wenski was named to take his place. In 1996 the agency was renamed Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami, Inc. Two years later Richard Turcotte, Ph. D. was chosen as Chief Executive Officer to oversee programs and services. Dr. Turcotte revamped the organizational structure, and began the process of modernizing the agency. He added a grants and development office to search and apply for new funding to stabilize the \$14 million budget.

Catholic Charities assumed administration of the Pierre Toussaint Haitian Catholic Center in 1999. The Center is the oldest and most comprehensive social service center caring for the needs of the Haitian community in South Florida. In the year 2000, Catholic Charities increased transitional housing capacity by assuming administrative responsibility for New Life Family Shelter in Miami.

The services of Catholic Charities were expanded to Monroe County when two outreach offices were opened in the summer of 2000 at St. Peter Church in Big Pine Key, and at the former St. Bede's Parish in Key West. Teresa House in Key West opened in 2000 to house and assist homeless families in two transitional

apartments. Additional family transition shelters were opened at Providence Place in Oakland Park, Angelica House in Pompano Beach, and New Life in Miami.

The period of 2007 – 2010 brought new challenges. Despite a dismal economic climate, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami, Inc. increased endowment funds and completed extensive renovations to existing buildings. With the help of a grant from The Ocean Reef Foundation, South Dade Child Care Center added four new handicapped-accessible classrooms, a large resource room, and a children's library. This investment increased capacity by 80 students and improved resources for academic achievement. In August 2009 Holy Redeemer Child Care Center opened in the heart of Liberty City. The Center provides comprehensive Child Care Services to 100 children from low income families; 98% of whom are African American.

In 2009, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami served over 9,717 residents in Broward and Miami-Dade counties providing diverse programs to meet the needs of today's families. Catholic Charities maintains its steadfast commitment to bring service and care with professionalism, dignity, and compassion, and to advocate on behalf of those in need.

We serve people not because they are Catholic.
We serve people because we are Catholic.©