



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Catholic Social Services to welcome JOIN and St. Francis Evangelization Center into its family of ministries!

Columbus, Ohio — [March 27th, 2026] — Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Columbus (CSS) is pleased to announce that the Joint Organization for Inner-city Needs (JOIN), located in Columbus, and St. Francis Evangelization Center (St. Francis), located in McArthur, are joining the ministry of Catholic Social Services. This change will further strengthen the commitment that the Diocese of Columbus has to social outreach to individuals and families experiencing poverty and hardships across the 23 counties in the diocese, especially central and southeastern Ohio.

Bishop Earl K. Fernandes of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Columbus emphasized the importance of partnership in living out the Church's mission. "The Church is called to be present to those most in need, especially in communities where resources can be limited," Bishop Fernandes said. "The work of JOIN and the St. Francis Evangelization Center reflect the Gospel in action. I am grateful that Catholic Social Services will sustain and grow this mission so that the people of those regions continue to encounter both compassionate service and the love of Christ."

JOIN serves individuals and families in Franklin County by providing emergency financial assistance for those facing economic hardship. At the same time, the St. Francis Evangelization Center has been a vital presence in Vinton County, offering community support, food, and emergency resources to families in that region.

The combined ministry will operate as Catholic Social Services, which has served for 80 years to care for seniors, families, and persons living with disabilities. The combined organization will now serve over 17,000 unique individuals across central and southeastern Ohio.

"JOIN and the St. Francis Evangelization Center have a long and faithful witness of serving our neighbors in central and southern Ohio," said Kelley Henderson, President and CEO of Catholic Social Services, "and this is the right time to combine our ministry in response to the changing needs of Ohio." The Columbus headquartered operations of JOIN will merge into existing locations of Catholic Social Services, while the St. Francis Evangelization Center location in McArthur will become a new expanded community outreach center with more services and a broader reach.

Lisa Keita, the current Executive Director of both JOIN and St. Francis, will oversee the transition and help Catholic Social Services launch this initiative to serve the needs of rural communities in Ohio. "This transition marks an exciting new chapter for JOIN and St. Francis," Keita said, "as we can now expand our reach, and ensure that individuals and families in our community continue to receive the care they deserve."

About Catholic Social Services

Since 1945, Catholic Social Services has been a source of compassion, dignity, and hope for those Christ calls us to serve throughout our community. Serving over 11,000 individuals annually, our mission is supported by dedicated staff and passionate volunteers who help seniors find connection, guide families towards a brighter future, and assist persons with disabilities find new freedom. Visit colscss.org

About the Diocese of Columbus:

The Diocese of Columbus has a mission to spread the joy of the Gospel throughout the 23 counties in Central Ohio that it serves. Erected in 1868 by Pope Pius IX, there are now almost 500,000 Catholics residing within the diocese. The Diocese of Columbus has one of the seven major basilicas in Ohio, as well as a diocesan shrine. The Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes was ordained and installed as the 13th bishop in May of 2022. Visit columbuscatholic.org

Media Contact:

Julie Naporano

VP of Development & Communications

Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Columbus

614-857-1236

jnaporano@colscss.org

Jason Mays

Sr. Director of Communications

Office of Communications

614-228-2453

jmays@columbuscatholic.org