



ROMAN CATHOLIC  
**DIOCESE** of  
**SPRINGFIELD-CAPE GIRARDEAU**

*Office of the Bishop*

February 02, 2024

*Feast of the Presentation of the Lord*

Dear Parents,

In 1843, Bishop Charles de Forbin-Janson of France made an appeal to the children of France to help children around the world. His vision was “children helping children” as they prayed and sacrificed for poor children around the world. Specifically, his program was “to say a Hail Mary every day and give a small coin every month to help feed the children in our missions.” When I read that little notice in the winter 2023 edition of *Mission* magazine, I thought it described our Lenten Youth Project perfectly.

This Lent I am asking the youth of our diocese to help feed the poor of southern Missouri directly through five food pantries scattered throughout our diocese “from east to west.” Those pantries include Sacred Heart in Webb City; St. Joseph in Springfield; Ste. Marie du Lac in Ironton; St. Sylvester (Eminence Food Harvest) in Eminence; and St. Mary Cathedral in Cape Girardeau.

The statistics are staggering. In southern Missouri, one in eight children face hunger, which is higher than the state average. Children oftentimes go to bed hungry and wake up the next morning not knowing when they will have their next meal. They go to school hungry and have difficulty learning because of it.

In addition, 41% of hungry households must choose between food and utilities; 36% of hungry households must choose between paying for food and medicine/medical supplies; and 89% of hungry households have an average income of \$25,000 or less. The need is great.

As Bishop Forbin-Janson did in 1843, so I appeal to the youth of our diocese in 2024 to make a difference in childhood hunger in southern Missouri. The funds raised during this 2024 Lenten Youth Project, along with prayer, will be a beautiful example of “children helping children” some 179 years later.

With the assurance of my prayers for a blessed Lent for you and your children, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Edward M. Rice  
Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau