



The  
Episcopal Diocese  
of New York



Episcopal Charities  
A commitment to caring

*This coming Sunday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, parishioners of 200 Episcopal churches in the Diocese of New York will join in an offering to benefit the 33 non-sectarian food pantries and soup kitchens supported by Episcopal Charities. Instituted by the diocesan convention last November and supported by a \$50,000 matching grant from Trinity Church, Wall Street, this first **Episcopal Charities Sunday** has, in light of rising food prices and plummeting donations, turned out to be even more vital for the well-being of hungry men, women and children than delegates could have imagined.*

**IN FACE OF EMPTY SHELVES, EPISCOPAL CHARITIES SUNDAY  
TO RAISE FUNDS FOR NON-SECTARIAN FOOD PANTRIES AND  
SOUP KITCHENS IN DIOCESE OF NEW YORK**

For immediate Release

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(New York, NY) – It's no longer fresh news that basic food prices are rising dramatically (8.2% in the first quarter of 2008, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation, and the upward trend continues apace). What is only just starting to attract the attention it merits is the resulting nationwide hunger crisis: people on the financial edge, further stretched by increases in other essentials like gas, are turning in greater and greater numbers to food pantries and soup kitchens to make up the difference.

"When people get to this stage," says Mary Beth Sasso, the Executive Director of Episcopal Charities, "they don't have a real choice. They have no resources to fall back on. If they don't pay the rent, they lose their home. If they don't buy gas, they're out of a job. When they've paid for all that, they spend the rest—if there is any—on food. So food is always the thing that gets squeezed."

Unfortunately, this latest squeeze coincides with a frightening drop in financial and in-kind contributions to food pantries and soup kitchens from government and foundations. In-kind donations to the Food Bank for New York, for example, from supermarkets, food manufacturers and wholesale distributors are expected to drop by 44% in fiscal 2008.\*

"Food pantries now have alarmingly bare shelves, and soup kitchens are struggling to keep up with the demand," says Sasso. "At the same time more and more people are hungry. This problem was already growing when our diocesan convention voted last November to institute **Episcopal Charities Sunday**, on which offerings at all participating Episcopal churches in the diocese will be dedicated to our non-sectarian

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\* Lisa Fickenscher, *Food Banks going hungry*, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008. URL:  
<http://www.crainsnewyork.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080525/SUB/626378926/1008/information>

feeding programs. But even as recently as that we couldn't have imagined how important it would turn out to be."

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The first Episcopal Charities Sunday will take place, not a moment too soon, this coming weekend on Sunday, June 1<sup>st</sup>. Trinity Church, Wall Street has generously offered a matching grant of up to \$50,000.

Episcopal Charities is the outreach arm of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. More information is available at <http://ec-ny.org/>. The Episcopal Diocese of New York has its seat at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in Manhattan. It includes 203 congregations and 65,000 people in Manhattan, the Bronx, Staten Island and Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester counties. For more information, visit [www.diocesenyc.org](http://www.diocesenyc.org).

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