



Catholic Housing Initiative of the East Bay

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Feast of Corpus Christi, 2002

Dear Friends,

Housing has been for a good number of years a persistent and complex problem here in the diocese. Its most graphic example is with the homeless, but we are well aware that it is now affecting the health of our families.

As with all metropolitan areas in this country, the Bay Area is suffering very much from a high rise in housing costs. The situation has led many of our younger couples and long time parishioners to move elsewhere.

Our history is that the market controls the costs. We are reminded, however, that in the economic pastoral of the bishops of the United States in 1986, we spoke of economic situations as measured qualitatively by what they do to and for people.

The role of the Church therefore becomes important in meeting this fundamental human need. Our Catholic Charities has initiated a direction to bring to the fore our responsibility in this corporal work of mercy. There has been a ready response from The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Franciscan Charities, the Diocesan Social Justice Resource Center and others to join in this effort. For many years this direction has been anticipated in our parishes because of the admirable and responsible role they have played in situations of housing in their own areas.

We wish to bring to the consciousness of our own people especially, but also to the community at large, the need to place housing as a higher priority. The costs of housing are very large. Yet public funding for housing has been diminished. All of us wonder about the situation of so many of our people moving to very distant areas with consequent long commutes to work and therefore the very limited time that parents will spend with their own children. We do not wish to stand idly by as this takes place.

We wish to affirm very much the housing work that has taken place in our parishes over the years. We would wish to join hands with our interfaith brothers and sisters who have this same interest. "Tool Kits" as well as resource people will be available to you by the end of this month and throughout these next months. We expect our newly formed "Catholic Housing Initiative of the East Bay" to continue providing us with creative ways that we as parishioners, especially in our local areas, can aid in providing housing, especially for our young families, our elderly and disabled.

We are at the beginning of the dialogue. We hope that fruitful and concrete actions will follow quickly.

Sincerely,

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John S. Cummins
Bishop of Oakland