MULTIPLE INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

Cross Catholic OUTREACH

Delivering Food, Shelter and Hope to the Poorest of the Poor

UPDATE

Faith in Action

Feeding Hungry Children and Empowering Catholic Works of Mercy in Impoverished Communities

— Worldwide —

In Guatemala, Diego and his family enjoy nutritious Vitafood.

Prepared for

Knights of Columbus

September 2026

Special Thank You!

Cross Catholic Outreach Gratefully Acknowledges

Knights of Columbus

for Blessing Poor Children and Their Families With

Nutritious Food and Box of Joy® Gifts

— WORLDWIDE —

Knights of Columbus host a food packing event to feed the world's poor.

Box of Joy is a registered trademark of Cross Catholic Outreach.

Nourishment for Bodies and Souls

You did it again!

We are incredibly grateful that the Knights of Columbus rose to the challenge to supply critically needed meals to Catholic ministries around the world by hosting food packing events.

This past fiscal year, **Knights councils hosted four food packing events to provide nutritious Vitafood meals** for the poor and vulnerable. What an amazing blessing! In addition, **134 Knights councils participated in Box of Joy** to provide a very special surprise to children who might otherwise get nothing at all for Christmas.

In Malawi, Grace and her family receive Vitafood through our local partner, the Diocese of Karonga.

As we celebrate your achievements, we also celebrate the important role you played in empowering the Church's broader mission. Your meals and gift boxes went to trusted ministry partners who are meeting urgent needs and transforming families and communities while spreading God's love. This update offers a glimpse into that bigger picture, through which Christ's love becomes more visible as the poor receive food, water, shelter and other compassionate aid. In fiscal year 2025, that effort produced $449 million in aid to the poor and vulnerable around the world — a number we expect to surpass as we close the books for 2026. Of course, we could not have achieved these successes without the prayers and generosity of our many Catholic friends, including you!

The Power of Vitafood

We love Vitafood — and so do the families and communities we serve! In addition to being packed with protein and vitamins, these scientifically formulated meals are our go-to response to world hunger for the following reasons:

- **Efficiency:** Hundreds of thousands of meals can be easily packed into one shipping container and rushed to where they are most needed. This lowers the cost per meal delivered.
- **Shelf Stability:** As a dry good, Vitafood has a shelf life of two years, which is very helpful in communities that lack refrigeration or when a container needs to be held in reserve for emergencies.
- **Hands-On Opportunities:** Vitafood packing events give Cross Catholic Outreach friends and donors a chance to perform an inspiring service activity for the poor.
- **Evangelization:** When communities gather to package Vitafood and our ministry partners distribute those meals, the Church visibly unites to share God's love with those in deepest need.

Antonio feeds nutritious Vitafood to his daughter, Fatima.

Preventing Hunger in the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima

At a recent Vitafood distribution in Guatemala, a doctor on staff with the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima shared his thoughts on the impact of the meals.

"We can really see the difference that Vitafood makes," said Dr. Emmanuel Hernandez, who expressed gratitude for our donors. "We thank you for supporting our neediest communities. We have a high malnutrition rate, and we can see how much the Vitafood is helping."

According to Dr. Hernandez, these meal distributions are a great benefit to local parents who are too poor to buy adequate food for their children. He often sees children who are malnourished and underweight, but he has observed that after a month of receiving regular Vitafood meals, the children become stronger, start growing at normal rates, and even improve academically. In addition, he said the program frees up families' resources to spend on other important needs.

After the distribution, we visited the home of Antonio and Jocelyn, who benefit from the Vitafood program. Jocelyn demonstrated for us how she prepares the meals in her outdoor kitchen, adding ingredients such as tomatoes, onions and carrots. Antonio shared how the Vitafood has dramatically improved the health of his children, who have overcome malnourishment. The couple has three young sons — Axel, Isaias and Diego — and also a daughter, Fatima.

"I can definitely see a change in them," Antonio said. "We thank [the donors] because even though you don't know us, you help us. You are a channel that God uses to bless us. We are very grateful to God and to you for helping us. I wish many blessings on you and your families."

It is important to note that this family is not just taking handouts — they are also participating in the diocesan home gardens project funded by Cross Catholic Outreach. This means that while their urgent need for food is being met, they are also being trained and equipped to grow a flourishing vegetable garden and become more self-sufficient.

Giving Safe Shelter

Antonio's family has been impacted by Cross Catholic Outreach and the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima in another profound way: In 2020, they were gifted a new home. Their old house — a dirt-floor shack with damaged wood panels for walls — now serves as the kitchen, while the primary living space is a solid concrete-block structure with a high-quality galvanized metal roof designed to withstand severe storms. The new house is both safer and larger than the old one and will continue to give them security and peace of mind for years to come.

This past fiscal year, we funded the construction of 323 homes in six dioceses in Guatemala. We also funded housing programs in other countries around the world such as Haiti, Ethiopia and Vietnam. In every case, we worked through local partners, trusting them to determine the most culturally appropriate and affordable housing and how to structure the programs in the best way to honor the dignity of the beneficiaries and empower them to flourish.

Diego stands in the doorway to his house, which was provided by Cross Catholic Outreach.

Father Alejandro García, who leads the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima's Caritas outreach, prays for Antonio, his wife Jocelyn and their children outside their home.

Mary draws water from a well provided by Cross Catholic Outreach.

Transforming Malawi

Malawi is one of the world's poorest countries, and much of that poverty can be found in remote villages served by the Diocese of Karonga.

Cross Catholic Outreach has been partnering with the diocese to alleviate that poverty and spark long-term, holistic change. One way we are making an impact is by addressing the immediate need for hunger relief. In recent years, the support from friends like you made it possible for us to send millions of Vitafood meals to this struggling region.

Once that immediate need was met, families were in a position to focus on long-term goals. Our agriculture program provided supplies and training for 250 households to cultivate stronger farms and grow enough food not only to feed their families but also to generate income.

Another program aimed at long-term change provides safe, reliable water sources in villages that depend on contaminated, insufficient sources such as streams and hand-dug wells.

One recent beneficiary is Mary, a widowed grandmother in the village of Chilonga, which received a simple but durable hand-pump well. Mary recalled for us the challenges she formerly faced just to get water.

"Before this well, we used to draw water from the Lushombe riverbed, where the water was dirty and unsanitary," Mary said. "The water used to produce a foul smell. The food we prepared also had the same bad smell. Most times we had to dig into the riverbed to access it. In other cases, the riverbed would also run out of water."

Now, thanks to our partnership with the Diocese of Karonga, Mary is filled with joy because her family can get clean water every day without sacrificing precious time.

"At this moment, I can say that we are very happy, as we have a clean and steady water source that is close by," she said. "Even my grandchildren can make it to school on time. Before the well, they used to travel to the riverbed to draw water for bathing, which took a lot of time and caused them to be late for classes."

Mary no longer has to worry about snakes either! At the river, snakebites were common for people drawing water, but at the pump station, villagers can fill their containers without any fear of animal attacks.

Spreading Joy in Guatemala

It's not very often that a clown shows up in rural Guatemala. As the laughter of children and adults alike swelled in the community of Willy Wood, you knew something special was happening.

After the clown captivated the crowd for 45 minutes, the main event began. Staff from the Guatemalan Diocese of Suchitepéquez-Retalhuleu handed out Box of Joy gifts to 100 excited children, who began to unwrap them right there onstage.

Isabel and Darly were so happy to receive their gift boxes!

Two of those children, sisters Darly and Isabel, had never participated in Box of Joy before — or received any Christmas gift that compared to this.

"I like the rosary the best because I love God very much," said Darly, who had put on her best purple dress for the event. "He gave us life."

The girls' mother, Norma, was there with them, sharing in their excitement.

"I am very grateful to everyone who gave these gifts to our children," Norma said. "My husband works on a farm, and we could never afford gifts like these."

Later, diocesan staff brought gift boxes along as they visited families at home, so even more children could receive this special blessing. One little boy, Emilio, told us, "I loved my shirts, my crayons and my rosary."

Long-Term Change

This exciting Day of Joy, as we call it, was not just a one-and-done operation but rather the result of our long relationship with the local diocese. In fact, it was around this same time that our partner was putting the finishing touches on another Cross Catholic Outreach effort — the installation of a reliable water system that now pumps clean, abundant water directly to 263 households in Willy Wood.

"It was a relief to see the water come out. First, I had joy because we were able to drill and also because we were able to fulfill the promises we made to the community — and they were not just empty words," said César Castillo, director of the diocese's Caritas outreach. "It represents an advancement for the development of children and youth in the community."

Fr. Alejandro hands out boxes of Vitafood.

May God Bless the Knights of Columbus!

Thank you to all members of the Knights of Columbus who helped send Vitafood and Box of Joy gifts to the poor and vulnerable! Your partnership with Cross Catholic Outreach has set a powerful example of Catholic faith in action, and it has shown the amazing impact the Church can have on families and communities in need when people embrace Christ's call to love and serve those on the margins of society. As you have seen, the meals and gifts you provided were important components of a broader transformational strategy that includes many programs: building homes, installing water systems, empowering farmers, supporting child education, and more!

Please pray with us for our global ministry partners and the communities where they humbly and compassionately work to provide critical aid and change lives. Pray that the seeds of hope you have sown may continue to reap harvests of joy and abundance as our partners walk alongside the poor, meeting urgent needs, empowering mothers and fathers to support their families, and equipping children to pursue their dreams.

Thank you again, and God bless the Knights for your hard work and faithful service!

"Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

MATTHEW 5:16

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