

Dear Friends of Saint Charles Caritas,

Thank you God for 17 years of blessings to this charity!

Saint Charles Caritas was founded in March 2001 by James & Merlyn Baker with the blessings of Monsignor Dennis Mikulanis. It started with a thought and the making about this charity did not come overnight. It was a working in process. To this day, it is still a working in process. God did it to make it happen. It so happened that Jim & Merlyn were chosen to do it and they answered the calling. Everything had and still is something to do with God.

Jim & I moved from Texas St. to Palm Ave to be closer to my work at Sanyo, Otay Mesa (this move became the beginning of the work in process by the Lord to us). Jim right away registered us at St. Charles Church in 1991. Before this charity, we joined the Bible Study with Jim joined first followed by me after a month. We both became catechists for children's confirmation classes on Saturdays, then became both Extra Ordinary Ministers. Jim did the Jail Ministry while I did the Ministry for the Sick. We thought we were going to join my mother at St. Jerome, so we did for 6 months. We found out that my mother wanted to be with her friends at St. Jerome. We both volunteered at St. Vincent de Paul (this was another training for us) scooping food for the homeless and chopping tomatoes in the kitchen. I also encouraged my professional group of accountants when I was the president in 2000 to volunteer at St. Vincent de Paul. We did the inventory of the warehouse donated items such as Barbie Dolls, brand new t-shirts and other items that need to be counted for the year and also scoop food for the homeless. It was fun because our profession was not only for serving ourselves professionally but also serving a charity.

I was for 5 years at Sanyo Otay Mesa and my company decided for employees to work in TJ for the Twin Plants. It was a blessing in disguise, this was another opening of faith in God. God had shown again the poor people in Tijuana. Day after day I saw young people trying to go to work by riding in a bus and majority had to take 3 bus trips to go to work. Everything they got were in the plastic grocery bags that they were holding, roads were unpaved and when it rains, it became a muddy and some buses cannot just make it. It took about 5 years before it sunk into my head that if these people were poor going to work how about, behind the poor. They were really poor! I spoke with Jim if we can help an orphanage in TJ. He was thinking the same. It was time to search for a charity run by nuns or priests as we both agreed but cannot find one, no connection and no know how where, internet was just starting. Jim went to the Diocese of San Diego and spoke with the receptionist and told us the same if we can try the internet. We did that before he came to the Diocese. We did not give up, still searching and came back to St. Charles and asked Monsignor Mikulanis if he knows any charity run by nuns or priests and Fr. Dennis gave us one number. This was now the beginning of charity contact. It took me 3 months before the call was answered because of my accented Spanish, the phone calls were hang up after picking them up. I was not discouraged, I tried it again. Now, we finally have one charity to help, feeding the street people daily twice a day in TJ. When we first came to this charity in TJ, we had brought 50 lbs of rice and 50 lbs of beans. It was not enough. The second time and many more trips to this charity, my San Diego American Accountant organization, I asked them if we can help this charity. The officers and members pitched in about \$100 and we bought again bags of beans and rice. This was before the starting of the charity at St. Charles.

Jim spoke with Monsignor Dennis Mikulanis if we can have the church community help us to help this charity. Jim & I were happy to know that Fr. Mikulanis love the poor. Our first meeting was announced in the bulletin and 5 people attended: Monsignor Dennis Mikulanis, Jim Baker, Cecilio Salamanca, Joe Bajo and I. Fr. Mikulanis announced in the pulpit about the charity and Jim and I explained after masses what we were going to donate were beans and rice (which we up front \$500 worth of beans and rice). Two and a half year later, Fr. Mikulanis was assigned to San Bernardo Church.

It was time to change the name of the charity because a charity in Tijuana owns the name we were using. Jim asked for a meeting with Fr. Fernando Ramirez, St. Charles new pastor for the name of the charity. Jim wanted to have St. Charles on it and Fr. Fernando added in the Caritas. This was how Saint Charles Caritas name started.

(Our Trials) Jim ran Saint Charles Caritas for about 2 years. Jim got a stroke in Nov 27, 2004 right after Thanksgiving Day (after visiting the Casa de Cuna orphanage in TJ). Jim told me to take over. He said it is now my turn and not to worry because God is there and he will be there with me. Then in August 5, 2013 Jim was diagnosed with lung cancer. The doctor gave him 5 months to live. We decided were going to fight the cancer. It was a dark time for both of us but still seeing a glimpse of hope. In November 2013, Jim asked me if I can bag food for the homeless in the South Bay and without hesitation the answer was yes (25 bags) and distributed them. He asked me again if I can do it in December with socks, t-shirts and other toiletries and of course, it was a yes. In the processed in the December, his last week was happier for Jim although he was in so much pain. He passed away in December 25, 2013. This program was named after him " Jim's Project Homeless Help", now we bagged and distributed food and toiletries for 48 times.

Fr. Jim Bahash told me that Jim's passing on Christmas Day was a gift to Jesus. I paused, realized and kept calm on that moment that Fr. Jim was right.

Today, 17 years later the Saint Charles Caritas is stronger than ever! God started for us this charity and God will always be there for this charity.

I thank you so much dearest donors and volunteers for helping the poor children, poor elderly, young abused mothers with children, the homeless and the down trodden. With your help, we can do God's work.

Sincerely yours,

Merlyn Baker

Saint Charles Caritas
Imperial Beach/South San Diego
990 Saturn Blvd.
San Diego, CA 92154
tel# (619) 428-0199
SaintFrancis2001@aol.com
<http://saintcharles.org/st-charles-caritas/>