

February 11, 2016

Your Eminence/Excellency,

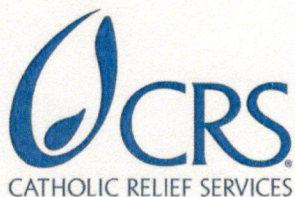
On Wednesday, Michael Hichborn of the Lepanto Institute launched a malicious [attack](#) against Catholic Relief Services timed to disrupt the launch of CRS Rice Bowl, our Lenten faith enrichment program that helps more than 13,000 parishes and schools across the country engage individuals and families in deepening their participation in the traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Every misleading message included in the latest Lepanto posting is a repeat from previous attacks and has already been thoroughly reviewed by CRS staff, as well as bishops on our board and moral theologians. So it is disappointing and disturbing that this group continues to repeat the same discredited claims and misleads the faithful in an attempt to breed discontent and distract from the wonderful work Catholics are accomplishing around the world.

As the [Administrative Committee of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) said in 2013, these groups “do not speak for the Catholic Church and we advise the Catholic faithful to exercise caution and consult the CRS website for clarification before endorsing or giving credence to the groups’ critiques.”

Over the past five years, CRS has redoubled our efforts to ensure that we are upholding Catholic teaching in all our programming. We established a wide range of trainings, policies and procedures with the assistance of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, the USCCB Committee on Doctrine, the National Catholic Bioethics Center, and other theologians. If we ever find a problem in our programs reaching nearly 100 million people in 100 countries each year, we correct it.





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I have personally witnessed the amazing work Catholic Relief Services does on behalf of the Catholic community in the US to witness our faith and help the "least among us" in some of the most difficult situations in our world. We can be proud of this work.

Please feel free to use this information in your responses if you or your staff receive inquiries about the latest attack. And please do what you can to encourage the faithful in your diocese to continue to use CRS Rice Bowl to enrich their Lenten journey this year.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads '+ Paul S. Coakley'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley  
Archbishop of Oklahoma City  
Chairman, CRS Board of Directors