

**Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati
Housing Principles
October 9, 2013**

Remarks by Most Rev. Joseph R. Binzer for Press Conference

On behalf of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, I want to express my thanks to MARCC and the other judicatory leaders gathered here as we release these principles for housing in Greater Cincinnati. For too long of a time, our region has suffered from a lack of housing for the most poor and vulnerable. Last year in Hamilton County, for example, over 7,000 people were homeless, 1,100 of which stayed in locations not fit for human habitation¹; nearly 15,000 households were on a waiting list for the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority²; and nearly 3,000 homes were lost to foreclosure.³

In the midst of a sluggish jobs recovery, sequestration and debates over additional federal budget cuts, we anticipate that this situation will only get worse. So today the faith community is stepping forward to provide a moral framework for how government, businesses, non-profits, and other decision makers can help finally alleviate this crisis. By ensuring affordable housing, through both public partnerships and private marketplaces, we exercise a preferential option for the poor. We also strengthen our whole community by providing stability to thousands of individuals and families, so that they may thrive and contribute to our common good.

In the Catholic tradition, we believe that decent housing is a human right. Our hearts ache when we read in the Christian Scriptures that there was no hospitable room for Mary and Joseph with their new son, Jesus (Luke 2:7). And so, we are compelled to help ensure that every child of God, made in God's image, has a safe place to lay his or her head.

Over the years, we, like many other faith communities, have tried to respond. Many Catholic organizations have directly provided shelter to the poor, disabled and elderly. So many generous people from our parishes, schools and agencies dedicate their time and talents to serve the homeless, build and renovate homes, and advocate for policies that secure affordable housing. In relation to the foreclosure crisis, we have supported organizations that have provided homebuyer counseling and worked with mortgage companies to keep families in their homes.

Yet so much more is needed. It is my hope that this occasion can motivate our local community to advance MARCC's housing principles through two necessary fronts:

1. That decision makers of our region can envision a comprehensive approach to ensure that public and private markets make safe and stable housing accessible to everyone; and
2. That a culture of respect be fostered in our communities, as well as in our own houses of worship, as we struggle for solutions to this persistent problem. All areas of our region must bear the responsibility for rental and owner-occupied housing affordability. Yet, we know that these issues can raise tensions among residents in various neighborhoods. Therefore, everyone should have a place at the table in these conversations and work should be done to promote sensible solutions for all stakeholders. Most importantly, in all these discussions, let us challenge ourselves always to maintain a spirit of welcome and hospitality and to commit to seeing that the housing crisis finally comes to an end.

Thank you.

¹ *2012 Annual Report: Progress Report on Ending Homelessness, Strategies to End Homelessness*

² Presentation by Gregory D. Johnson, CEO, Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority, Sept. 11, 2013

³ *A Decade of Foreclosures and the Crisis Continues: A Study of Foreclosure in Hamilton County, Ohio in 2012*, Working In Neighborhoods, Inc.