

**PRESS RELEASE**

**CARITAS POLAND FOR REFUGEES**

**Caritas Poland on the border: as long as the crisis lasts, we will be with all those in need**

**“There is no contradiction in helping the needy and respecting the work of those who defend the security of our border and our country,” said Father Dr. Marcin Iżycki, director of Caritas Poland. The organization became involved in helping the needy as a result of the crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border. Tents of Hope have been set up in seven parishes in the Archdiocese of Białystok. They collect food, clothing, blankets, i.e., the most necessary things that can be used to support the needy.**

Details of Caritas Poland activities were announced at a press conference in Podlipki, in Podlasie. Since September, the value of aid given by Caritas to support migrants in Poland amounted to over 1 million PLN.

Caritas Polska emphasizes that its activities in the Polish-Belarusian border region are aimed at helping not only migrants who have crossed into Poland and need support. “As long as the crisis lasts, we will be with all those in need. In our Caritas activities we try to remember all groups affected by the crisis: migrants and refugees, the inhabitants of these areas and the services,” said Father Marcin Iżycki.

The head of Caritas Poland also recalled that this Sunday a collection for migrants and refugees will be conducted in churches throughout Poland. This is a response to the appeal of the President of the Polish Bishops’ Conference Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki. The director of Caritas Polska also drew attention to the statement of the episcopate's President, in which he condemned the use of human tragedies by the Belarusian side to conduct activities against Polish sovereignty. “For this reason, I would like to repeat once again that those affected by this evil need our solidarity,” Archbishop Gądecki said.

Fr. Cordian Szwarc, a Franciscan friar, was directly involved in the activities of Caritas Polska in the borderlands. The priest emphasized that parish communities have been trying to respond to the crisis from the beginning and Caritas wants to support these efforts. “We have been here for two weeks now, and we see that the people who form these parishes are good people, in the good sense of the word, simple, good people who have learned from their grandparents what is good and what is bad,” said Father Cordian Szwarc.

He added that whenever the residents met migrants asking for food, drink, or clothes, they helped them out of the kindness of their hearts. “There is a very different reaction to a person who asks for help with their hand out and a very different reaction when you see several thousand people gathered at the border and presented in this way,” said the deputy director of Caritas Poland. He also drew attention to the situation of local communities, worried about their safety. As he said, local communities express their gratitude to the uniformed services for providing security. “All actions that consist in strengthening this good relationship are also within our capabilities,” assessed Father Cordian Szwarc.

Jerzy Sęczek, director of the Caritas of the Archdiocese of Białystok, also thanked the residents for their attitude. He said that even though Catholics are in the minority in some of the places where help is given, this does not affect the work of Caritas. “We do not differentiate between people of different religions or nationalities, we help everyone,” assured Fr. Jerzy Sęczek. He added that Caritas of the Archdiocese of Bialystok has been cooperating with the Border Guard since the beginning of the crisis, supporting migrants in need. Father Sęczek also stressed that the officers, who are often members of local parishes, collected basic necessities from their churches and gave them directly to the migrants.

Grzegorz Kowalczuk, the coordinator of the Tents of Hope project, spoke about the importance of joint efforts to help at the border. “It is essential to analyze the needs. Yesterday in Hajnówka we wanted to open a local point, it turned out that there is a local aid initiative (...) Our task is simply to support any action that is good and connecting,” said Grzegorz Kowalczuk.

Caritas Poland declares that it is ready to help migrants in the long term. There are several centers for foreigners in Poland. As the director of Caritas Polska said, the number of people placed there has recently tripled.

(FNS/Caritas Poland)

**Downloads:**

PHOTO

<https://we.tl/t-20CUC3t9Oj>

VIDEO

Fr. dr Marcin Iżycki

<https://we.tl/t-Eqipe4zSAL>

Fr. Jerzy Sęczek

<https://we.tl/t-342GbpIY9u>

Br. Cordian Szwarc OFM

<https://we.tl/t-crYRFynjDD>

Maciej Dubicki

<https://we.tl/t-P0bsZAbCrr>

Grzegorz Kowalczuk

<https://we.tl/t-i9hgGquNsE>

Volunteers

<https://we.tl/t-fAFz5sdtiS>

Tent of Hope

<https://we.tl/t-bQUqHB48rq>

Conference

<https://youtu.be/qYednYdgE_k>

<https://we.tl/t-7KjvDfDfDo>

***About Caritas –*** *Caritas is the largest charity organization in Poland. It helps hundreds of thousands of people in need at home and abroad. The structure of Caritas in Poland consists of Caritas Polska, which acts as a coordinator of national and foreign projects, and 44 diocesan Caritas branches that provide direct help to those in need. The organization is part of the Caritas Internationalis and Caritas Europa networks.*

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