



DR. CAROLYN Y. WOO
PRESIDENT & CEO

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Dear Mr. Sample,

I still remember my first day of school in Hong Kong. I felt like such an outsider in a world I didn't understand. I felt nervous, frightened and very much alone.

My name is Carolyn Woo, and I'm the new president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services. I'm writing to introduce myself to you because you have been a loyal and steadfast CRS donor over the years. Because you are part of the CRS family—and committed to world's neediest people like I am—I wanted to take this opportunity to share my story with you, to tell you about where I come from.

I was born in Hong Kong in the 1950s and spent my earliest years there as part of a traditional Chinese family. I am the fifth of six siblings, the second and sixth are sons. (I always say that I am grateful to the brother who came after me. In the Chinese culture, sons are very important.)

My family fled from China to Hong Kong twice before I was born—once when Japan attacked China during World War II and again after Mao Tse-tung's communist revolution began to take hold. The second time was for good.

My parents were very worried about the family's future in China. It was difficult for them to make the decision to leave their ancestral home and everything they owned. But they did it.

Education was very important to my family, so they enrolled me in a Catholic school, which was run by the Maryknoll Sisters. Although I didn't know it at the time, the sisters received support from CRS.

Soon after I began, I came to love my new school. The sisters could be firm, but they were also fun, joy-filled and loving to all of us, and they instilled in me a great Catholic faith. I made wonderful friends, and I developed a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning that has stayed with me to this day.

As I grew older, I was determined to make my own way in life. I wanted an education and the opportunity to shape my own future. I not only wanted to be educated but wanted to go to school in the United States. With help

and sacrifices from my family and some childhood savings, I gathered enough money to fund my first year so I could earn scholarships to keep me going.

By the time I arrived in the United States in 1971, I was eager to take on my challenge. I soon realized that my Maryknoll education prepared me well for college in the United States, at Purdue University. I didn't know how much time I would have before my money ran out, so I worked harder than I'd ever worked before. I prayed every night that I would win a scholarship.

My prayers were answered. I was able to complete my bachelor's degree and go on to earn my Ph.D. I met my husband, David, at Purdue. (We were both on the parish council of the Newman Center there.) I stayed at Purdue to start my career as an academic, and David and I raised two sons. Later, I became the dean of the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame.

I guess that, in some ways, my life to that point represented the American Dream: Immigrant beginnings, hard work, earning a little help along the way, believing in myself. By the time I turned 40, I was content and fulfilled. My life had turned out to be much more than I could have possibly expected as a young girl in China.

But the dream wasn't yet complete.

In 2003, I received a visit from Ken Hackett, then president of CRS. He asked me if I might be interested in joining the CRS board of directors. Seeing a chance to work for such a well-regarded organization in God's service to poor people overseas, I leaped at the opportunity.

I've loved every minute of my work on the CRS board of directors, learning about dire needs and challenges around the world, understanding how CRS provides help to those who are suffering, spending time with people of faith who serve others so unselfishly. My time on the board was a true gift from God and a privilege.

Then, about a year ago, I was approached about the upcoming president and CEO vacancy with CRS. I was flattered and flabbergasted at the same time. How in the world could I lead such a large and complex organization? How would I know what to do? Could I possibly handle the overwhelming responsibility of providing aid and relief to the people who suffer most in the world?

Through prayer I overcame my fears, and I agreed to take the job on and give it my best.

Although I'm still in the early days as president and CEO, I think this might have been the biggest—and best—decision of my life. Think of it: Every day I get to come to work to dedicate myself to making the world a more loving place, as God intends it. I get to connect people like you with those who suffer beyond our imagination. I get to travel the world and see your dollars at work. I hear the incredible gratitude expressed by the people themselves, and I so wish that you could hear it too.

Of course, challenges surface daily. At times, it can be overwhelming, but God always answers my prayers for his guidance.

I've learned one important lesson so far. When I'm having a very tough moment, I remember that this is my chance to return blessings to God for all that he has showered upon me. My work does not just depend on me: I am surrounded with a great team of the most talented and dedicated individuals, and, most important, God is right here with us. When we give our absolute best to do the work God intended us to do, the work that Jesus himself did, I know we cannot go wrong. It is a privilege to be a part of CRS so that I can leave a small footprint in the world—a footprint of love, compassion and faith. And when you dig down to the very core of life, that's what matters most—at least to me.

I've also learned that leaders must have a compass with certain points that one does not compromise or forget. Here are my compass points:

- We must always direct our relief to those in most need, to those whose suffering is greatest. This, to me, is in keeping with God's word.
- We must strive tirelessly to make each and every dollar that people like you have given us so freely go as far as it possibly can to ease human suffering.
- We must never forget that our donors have earned our respect, trust and love. We are nothing without you. I am nothing without you. Suffering isn't alleviated without you. You are the one who starts it all.
- We must, above all, remain humble. We are merely the human instruments that connect your faith and compassion with the pain and poverty experienced by the most unfortunate among us.

Leaders are also supposed to be visionaries. I'm still forming my vision for CRS, but I do have a vision of the future that guides me and keeps me strong.

Throughout human history, there have always been more people in need than people ready to help. There have always been more victims than good Samaritans. There seems to have always been more pain than love in this world.

My vision is the reverse of that.

I envision the day when suffering is always responded to by love, where God's helpers outnumber those in need, where generosity is greater than want.

At the risk of sounding overly idealistic, I truly believe that, with God's help, we can bring this vision to life. Our world has more wealth than ever before. We have great capacity to connect and communicate. All we need is the faith, the desire and the will.

So many people I talk to here at home share this desire but feel overwhelmed. A retired teacher in Nebraska asks herself, "What could I possibly do to tip the balance?" The farmer in Georgia asks, "How can I make a difference with my ordinary means?" The grandmother in Colorado gives what she can but doesn't think in such grand terms because she feels incapable of effecting such great change.

Of course, none of us can change the world alone. We can only make great change in concert with each other. But when people come together in love and faith, miracles can happen.

One of the things that has made such a strong impression on me is the way that very ordinary CRS supporters—supporters like you—can make a huge difference in the lives of others. Whether your gift is large or small, whether it is made today or through a legacy gift in your will, your generosity will make a difference for years to come. Through love, we can participate in God's miracles. I see that each and every day in my life and in my work.

I want to close this letter simply by expressing my deep thanks for the compassion and love you have shared with people you will never meet. People in pain. Lonely people who thought they had lost hope. People for whom your gift was a miracle from God.

I also want to thank you just as much for trusting CRS to be the agent of your generosity. We are home to so many Catholics who express their faith through charity—and we take our responsibility most seriously in that regard.

You and I share much. We care deeply for the world's people. We have faith. We know that we must exercise that faith through giving. We want to leave this life with our own small footprint left in the sand.

I am so proud that your footprint will be next to mine.

May blessings overflow,



Dr. Carolyn Y. Woo
President & CEO

P.S. If you have questions about legacy gifts, you can contact a representative at CRS by phone at 1-888-435-7277, ext. 7291, or by e-mail at carl.foreman@crs.org.