

# Catholic Charities Justice and Compassion Award

May 11, 2016

*Given to recognize extensive philanthropic contributions and social impact on the Greater Boston community.*

## Bill Cummings' Remarks



Your Eminence, Reverend Clergy, Our Friends,

Debbie, thank you so much for that warm and **exceedingly** generous introduction. Thank you, Cardinal Sean, for such a **REALLY SPECIAL** recognition here this evening. It is dearly appreciated.

Additionally, Your Eminence, on behalf of **EVERYONE** in this hall, let me personally acknowledge your great

efforts to help make **all of Boston** a better place.

We all thank you as well for your tireless work as you lead and **STRENGTHEN** the Boston Church. Your **LEADERSHIP** is *extraordinarily* effective.

Joyce and I are truly humbled to be here with **ALL** of you who do **SO** much to help improve the quality of life for people of **EVERY** faith.

It was probably **30 years ago** that Joyce and I first came to realize that **no one** can truly **OWN** land. Even though we may hold some kind of **legal title**, how can we be anything more than **caretakers**, when it comes to land?

This was when we decided, with the full backing of our four children, to begin actively **giving away** our assets while we are still well enough and able enough to do it ourselves.

Our favorite advice about **giving**, by the way, is to just **forget** the old idea of “**giving until it hurts.**” Think instead, about “giving until **you feel really good** about what you are doing.” **As when...**As when we give to Catholic Charities...Right Debbie?

While Catholic Charities provides most of its services **DIRECTLY**, with its own people, Cummings Foundation is much less direct.

Locally, we now fund **HUNDREDS** of eastern Massachusetts nonprofits, almost all of which **COMPLEMENT** the work of Catholic Charities. **TOGETHER** you and they serve so many of the same populations.

Both Catholic Charities and Cummings Foundation are focused on helping to build a **just and compassionate society**. They both help ALL people to meet their basic needs, and **to live with dignity**.

Cummings Foundation works mostly in the communities that are HOME to our own 600 staff and their families, as well as to the staff-people of our **TWO THOUSAND** client firms, which lease our commercial properties.

On June 9, in a special ceremony at our TradeCenter 128 in Woburn, we will once again distribute awards of \$100,000 *each*, **to 100 of the most deserving greater Boston charities**. **Spread the word** about this annual program, which is fully detailed on [CummingsFoundations.org](http://CummingsFoundations.org).

When Joyce and I first created Cummings Foundation, just 30 years ago, we certainly never **imagined** that our small philanthropy might one day grow to become one of the several largest private foundations in New England.

Nor did we ever expect to be invited to join anything like the Giving Pledge organization that Debbie mentioned earlier.

The Giving Pledge, by the way, is surely the **only** place Joyce and I can still look around us and frequently realize that we are likely the **poorest** people in the room!

One year, while traveling to an especially remote annual Giving Pledge gathering, in southern Arizona, we arrived there from Phoenix in our Budget rental car. We later heard that we were the only members who did not have a **TAIL number** to provide the receptionist for our private plane!

Joyce and I do have the pleasure of giving away a great deal of money, but we try hard **to never THROW IT AWAY**, especially on extravagant luxuries like private jets.

We both come from very modest backgrounds, and do not often splurge, and we have never **ever** purchased anything but economy class airline tickets.

This August, however, we shall fly Business Class for the first time to celebrate our **50<sup>th</sup>** wedding anniversary in Venice.

So, why are we now providing **tens** of millions of dollars in grants, **every year**, instead of keeping it for ourselves and our heirs, or just spending it on luxuries?

Why? Because providing meaningful support benefitting a great many people is just so important, and it **DOES** feel really good to make a meaningful difference.

Both of us feel so blessed to have opportunities to make positive differences, both right here at home, and also **very** far away. We shall make **our third trip to East Africa** late next year.

We were delighted when Bill and Melinda **Gates Foundation** agreed to partner with us, and with Dr. Paul Farmer, to build a brand new international university. This will be the **University of Global Health Equity, in Butaro, Rwanda**.

Back home here, we are delighted to support a major **expansion** of Catholic Charities' EOSL Program – teaching English to mostly recently-arrived immigrants of all faiths, or no faith at all, in the Lynn/Salem area. These new Americans may be **struggling**, but they are trying **desperately** to improve their lot.

Our funding is certainly **NOT transformational** for Catholic Charities, **but your work** will almost **ALWAYS** be transformative for the people you serve.

Meanwhile, political discourse continues to spew hateful anti-immigrant, anti-Hispanic, anti-gay, and other **derisive** talk all over the country. That talk spreads fear and distrust, and undermines the work so many of you do every day.

Some liken this political talk **to a plague**. The same plague that spread through Nazi Germany in the 1930s. **Never forget**, my friends...**Never forget**, that **when prejudice and INtolerance are tolerated**, they are as well condoned and encouraged.

In closing, I remind you that we and Catholic Charities are **both** all about **building bridges**, especially for our marginalized neighbors. So much more than bridges over rivers and highways, these are **bridges of love**, and **bridges of hope**, and **bridges of understanding**.

With God's help, these will always be **BRIDGES OF OPPORTUNITY**, too.

We pray these bridges **will take us all**, where we otherwise could not go.