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Announces Retirement***Deacon Rick Birkel, Ph.D., will lead a year of succession planning
and transition management before retiring in June 2022*

Portland, Ore. - April 2, 2021 - After seven years leading [Catholic Charities of Oregon](http://www.catholiccharitiesoregon.org), Executive Director Deacon Rick Birkel, Ph.D., announced he will retire in June 2022. Birkel will lead a year of succession planning and transition management to ensure the change in leadership is seamless and the organization maintains its momentum providing comprehensive and holistic services to the most vulnerable members of the community.

Catholic Charities of Oregon's (CCO) mission is to ensure that essential, life-saving services and supports are accessible to those who need them most. A national search for a new leader of CCO, one of the most important human services organizations in Oregon, is expected to begin in July 2021 led by Sterling Search, Inc.

"It has been such an honor to lead this organization, and I am grateful to have more than a year to help the Board of Directors lay the groundwork for CCO's next leader," said Birkel. "This will ensure a smooth transition. I know that our community is in good hands with the exceptional leaders who will carry the work forward."

Birkel's 45-year career has spanned roles in human services, nonprofit management, research and higher education, and finally as the head of Catholic Charities of Oregon. During his tenure with CCO, Birkel launched several signature programs, including the [Healthy Housing Initiative](#), [Kenton Women's Village](#), [Center for Removal Defense](#), [Intercultural Counseling Center](#), Germaine's Café and Kitchen, and [Disaster Services/Fiscal Agency in Jackson County](#), as well as a number of affordable housing projects and food access and delivery programs. He also nurtured [El Programa Hispano Católico](#), graduating it to independent nonprofit status from a program within CCO.

"I am grateful for Deacon Birkel's service at Catholic Charities of Oregon for the past seven years and wish him the best in his new life in retirement," said the Most Reverend Archbishop Alexander K. Sample, the Archbishop of Portland in Oregon. "I also look forward to building upon Deacon Birkel's work and further extending the reach and impact of the Catholic Church in Western Oregon."

In addition to launching new programs, Birkel has made several other long-lasting imprints on the organization. Since Birkel was hired in 2013, CCO's Board of Directors has been transformed to better represent the community and the people the organization serves, with 56% people of color and 52% women. He has spearheaded the organization's diversity, equity and inclusion work, diversifying the 115-person team to include more than 40% of staff members and 45% of managers who identify as Black, Indigenous or people of color. Plus, he has carved pathways to leadership development and promotions that ensure a healthy pipeline of diverse staff throughout the entire organization.

"Rick's work has been transformative for Catholic Charities, as well as the people they serve," said Multnomah County Commissioner Sharon Meieran. "He is a systems thinker and a visionary, with the heart and soul of a counselor. He has established a legacy of inclusivity and representation at Catholic Charities that I know will be fostered and evolve far into the future."

Birkel's leadership has helped the organization garner recognition for its contributions to the community, including being named one of *Portland Business Journal's* top 10 most admired nonprofits in Oregon four years in a row, from 2017 to 2020.

"Rick has brought intentional and missional leadership to Catholic Charities throughout his tenure, but his strength and wisdom amidst these challenging times has been particularly inspiring," said Steve Moore, Executive Director of the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust. "He has navigated with grace, humility and the thoughtful leadership of a great team. At a time when faith-based groups like Catholic Charities are perhaps undervalued and under-recognized for their contributions to the common good, Rick has been quietly doing significant work with his team that continues to deliver a significant, positive imprint on our community."

About Catholic Charities

Since its founding in 1933, Catholic Charities of Oregon has been a trusted ally of the most poor and marginalized. The agency seeks to combat poverty and injustice throughout Western Oregon by providing professional, compassionate social services aimed to develop innovative and lasting solutions to poverty and injustice. Catholic Charities of Oregon is a member of Catholic Charities USA and of Caritas Internationalis, the global network of agencies that make up the charitable arm of the worldwide Catholic Church. The agency is headquartered in Portland at 2740 SE Powell Blvd. For more information, call (503) 231-4866 or go to www.catholiccharitiesoregon.org.

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