



Voice of the Poor Report from Western Region

www.voiceofthepoor.org

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Western Region is THE BEST! Hilmar Rosenast, Los Angeles, has just updated the Society's list of VOP Chairs and Volunteers. Total contacts listed across the eight regions are 473 *with 235 of them in the Western Region!* Lists by diocese have been shared across the western region and can be used as the base for a local VOP e-mail network.

What is happening in Phoenix, AZ?

Phoenix Diocesan Council VOP has met over the summer to reorganize with members taking over various responsibilities. Two of the council committee members, Julie Douglas and Frank Barrios, serve on the diocesan council. Ron Meyer, member of the National VOP Committee, will speak to Vincentians in New Orleans about the need for Voice of the Poor. Kathy Jorgensen is working on another "Navigating the Benefit Maze" for the fall – an educational workshop on remaining social services for the poor. Kathy is also organizing VOP's opposition to Prop 302 – an AZ initiative that would undo First Things First, an early childhood health screening and school readiness program statewide for needy kids.

What is happening in Tucson, AZ?

Tucson welcomes a new Voice of the Poor Council Chair, Giulio Grecchi. Tucson Vincentians interested in VOP have communicated with Lucy for the past few months – a special thanks to Charles Rooney for his weekly intentions.

What is happening in Portland, OR?

Maureen Sloan reports they are working on getting folks to sign up for Cap Wiz. Thank you, Maureen! (See article below on Cap Wiz! This is something that all of us should remember to do on a regular basis).

What is happening in Orange County, CA?

As reported earlier in the summer, Mike Clements, OC VOP, is collaborating with two other community groups who are putting on a September workshop on the impact CA state budget cuts will have on the poor. This is an idea that could be copied in many areas during these tough economic times.

CA Voice of the Poor contacts have been asked to join the California Catholic Legislative Network for up to date information on issues in Sacramento that impact those we serve. Recent Alerts have included a call for removing Life Without Parole (LWOP) legislation for minors and a call to remind legislators that budget cuts are hurting those unable to help themselves:

<http://www.leginfo@cacatholic.org>

What is happening in Seattle, WA?

Jim Bloss, North Sound Council VOP Chair, reports activity on many fronts and, as always, a very full plate. Activities include:

- (1) Recruiting VOP Conference Reps
- (2) Facilitated Project Homeless Connect along with other social service agencies at a local high school – 750 needy attended to get haicuts, petcare, store vouchers, clothing and connect with social services
- (3) Planning Veteran’s Stand Down(s) over the next few months – targeting needs of vets.
- (4) Based on a Needs Assessment, the Council has made an offer on a property for a Monroe Store/Comprehensive Services Center Project and hopes to involve other organizations in future collaboration
- (5) Considering but on hold a second property which could be kept for low income renters and
- (6) Considering but on hold a third property for a small transitional housing project
- (7) Continued discussions with the Interfaith Association for collaborative efforts to serve the needy in this county.

Recap of Resources for VOP Education and Outreach:

Suggested materials for VOP workshops or Council or Conference education can be ordered from our national office:

<http://www.svdpusa.org/Store/tabid/177/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

The Rule

Serving in Hope Module 4 (Catholic Social Teaching)

Serving in Hope Module 5 (The Rule)

Voice of the Poor Workbook

Poverty Video (DePaul University)

Contact Lucy Howell at Howishome@aol.com for copies that can be duplicated:

DVD (Ron Meyer): Why VOP is Important

CD VOP Power Point by Mary Watterson

Spread the word about VOP

Excerpts condensed to 4-5 bullet points from VOP Position Statements (approved by our trustees and reviewed by USCCB) are excellent submissions for your parish bulletin. There are now 10 Voice of the Poor Position Statements – the most recent one on education. They can be found at www.voiceofthepoor.org

Are You Signed up for Cap Wiz?

Cap Wiz is an interactive internet program that allows you as a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to register your opinion with members of Congress on various issues. It is EASY! ACTION ALERTS will be occasionally e-mailed to you from our national office in St. Louis. (A recent example had to do with funding for low income children's nutrition). Research behind these alerts is done by Catholic Charities who have staff in Washington, D.C. The decision to send an ACTION ALERT to our membership is made by our national president, Joe Flannigan.

How do I sign up? Go to the national website www.svdpusa.org and Click on Voice of the Poor at the top tool bar. Directions to enroll in CapWiz will pop up. Just imagine the impact we could have on legislation for the poor if only 10% of our members were signed up for and participating in Cap Wiz ACTION ALERTS.

Catholic Teaching on the Issue of Immigration

The following information is from the July SVdP Western Region Newsletter put together by Harry Merchant in Billings, MT. As mid-term elections approach and the rhetoric on immigration escalates, there is an excellent resource from the USCCB on this difficult topic.

“A Catholic Teaching on the Issue of Immigration” written by Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio (Bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn, NY, and formerly Director of the

USCC Migration and Refugee Services Office) offers an excellent overview of the debate over immigration. It is written in an easy to read question and answer format. Here are some excerpts from the publication.

Q. In the case of illegal immigration, shouldn't Catholics side with the law?

A. Illegal immigration is not something condoned by the Church. In our tradition, however, laws must be just. In this regard, an analogy might be drawn to another contentious social policy issue; namely, that of abortion. If Catholics were to side with the law permitting abortion, it would be an immoral act. And so it is with immigration laws when they do not respect the dignity of the human person, nor reflect Catholic social teaching. Laws are man made and all laws are not equally just.

Q. Isn't immigration a political and legal topic? Why should the Church involve itself in this matter?

A. Immigration is a political topic, just as the abortion issue is if you look at it from that point of view. It is something that is debated in the country and something that prompts the passing of laws to regulate it. The church involves itself in this matter, however, because there is moral content, as in most issues of public policy. Society's failure to obey the Gospel imperative to "welcome the stranger" is manifested in numerous ways. We are implicated by policies that lead to migrant crossing deaths, that separate families, that deny protection to those fleeing violence and intense privation.

Q. Most of the recent immigrants have come to the country in violation of the law; so shouldn't they be regarded as criminals?

A. Immigration violations have traditionally been enforced as "civil" laws, although more and more they are being turned into crimes and prosecuted as such. Most immigrants, however, are not criminals in any standard sense of the term. Most simply want to work hard, provide for their families and practice their faith. We must go beyond the issue of law here to find out what motivates immigrants to come to our country. What one finds is that it is mostly the lack of opportunity at home and the greater availability of opportunities here. The U.S. Bishops recognize that the law has been broken, but favor allowing undocumented immigrants to earn the right to remain through their hard work, their good character and learning English.

Q. What does the call to Christian charity ask of us when it comes to the immigration issue?

A. Christian charity asks of us, as we approach the immigration issue, that we understand the facts since we cannot direct our charity to any group without understanding the true situation.

This is just a sampling of the contents of this booklet. It answers many other questions and reinforces the fact that the Catholic Church and the U.S.

Bishops “believe that the most humane path to preserve the dignity of the person is through comprehensive immigration reform.”

If you or your conference would like a copy of this booklet, it is available for a nominal charge of \$4.95 and is available either via the internet, or at the downtown diocesan office, 400 East Monroe St, Phoenix, AZ (602-257-0030)

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