

Voice of the Poor Update



Our Lady of Angels Conference
St. Vincent de Paul
November 11, 2008



Voice of the Poor

- **Mission Statement:** In the spirit of Christian love and justice, the Voice of the Poor Committee upholds Catholic values by researching, validating, documenting, advocating, and promulgating issues related to the condition of the poor and disenfranchised for the purpose of helping Vincentians to live their faith by acting knowledgeably and credibly as a unified body speaking with one voice for the purpose of building up the Kingdom of God.



Key Issues of Concern

- Housing
- Health Care
- Childcare
- Restorative Justice



Activity Report

- Recruited San Mateo County membership
- Gaining empathy for the poor
 - Volunteering at Café St. Vincent
- Would like to create an OLA contact list for information, alerts and calls to action



Increasing Membership

- Goal: recruit at least one member from each San Mateo County Conference
- Attended conference meetings
 - Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (July)
 - Nativity Conference (July)
- Gathered email addresses



Empathy for the Poor

- Volunteer server for Café St. Vincent
- Donate juice and milk
- Assist with St. Vincent store
 - South San Francisco Homeless Help Center
 - Third Saturday of the month
 - 11/15
 - 12/20
 - 1/17
 - 8:00 am to 11:30 am



Future Opportunities

- A call for prayer from US Conference of Bishops
 - http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org/docs/FC_Novena.pdf

Other VOP Information & Updates



- U.S. economic stimulus bill—U.S. Conference of Bishops
 - Call to action to contact congressional members
 - http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/letter_to_house_9-18-08.pdf
- Jubilee Act for Responsible Lending and Expanded Debt Cancellation of 2008 (S. 2166)
 - Action requested by US Conference of Catholic Bishops
 - http://www.washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/110_SN_2166.html
- PEPFAR—U.S. President's emergency plan for AIDS relief
 - Tom Lantos bill; signed by President Bush
 - <http://www.pepfar.gov/press/107735.htm>
- Housing foreclosures & low income housing issues
 - Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008
 - <http://www.hud.gov/news/recoveryactfaq.cfm>

"What is the St. Vincent De Paul Society's 'Voice of the Poor' trying to do?"

Today there are 760,000 people in the U.S. who recently lost their jobs. Many people say, "It is their fault & why should we help them?" It satisfies a need to blame & to remind them it is their own fault, but nearly all are victims of the perfect economic storm. They did take risks. However, the professionals who should understand these markets, also, should have done better. We, also, have to add the many who accepted mortgages they could not afford. In short, many are to blame & the blaming will accomplish little towards solving our problem.

There was another time & place where things were slipping out of control. Traditional jobs were disappearing. 54% of the businesses failed. New jobs forced people to work longer for less pay. Credit was not available. The government did not act effectively & two, consecutive governments were thrown out. I am speaking of France in 1840.

This was where & when St. Vincent de Paul was founded by Fredrick Ozanam. He hoped the Society would grow. (It now is in ? countries). He wanted the volunteers to do more than give food, clothing & shelter to the poor. He hoped the volunteers would get to understand the poors' situation & share this understanding with the larger society. Today, we have the camp of the haves & the camp of the have nots. Oznam wants the S VdP volunteers to position themselves between the camps., pressuring the haves to give to the have nots & trying to get them to look on the have nots as their brothers & sisters. They, also, try to get the have nots to appreciate the assistance provided them, but recognize that some times this will only come out of a sustained effort as many poor are there because of serious problems which limits their abilities &/ or not having the time because of trying to survive that is needed to to learn how to appreciate.

The charge is to learn about the poor & then to tell others so they will be more supportive.

The poor include:

- . Single moms with their children. Divorce is a main cause of poverty.
- . Nearly half of the poor are children.
- . People who lost good jobs in industries that left the U.S.
- . People who are not educated.
- . People who who found new jobs in the service sector that pay less.
- . The mentally ill.
- . The persons who live pay check to pay check & it only takes their car breaking down to put them out on the street. Often these people hold down two jobs.
- . Those people who grew up in poverty, went to sub standard schools & never had the advantage of a decent start in life.

People worry about whether they are the deserving or undeserving poor. This does not matter because all will need help if they are to have any chance of becoming effective members of society. If they do not receive help, society will have to assist them later on in more costly ways such as develop & provide alcohol & drug rehabilitation programs, more prisons, etc.

The poor are human beings, with stories about early hopes & dreams, challenges that came their way & how they found themselves unable to surmount the challenges. Therefore, the words, "Why should we help them, it is their fault" does not mean anything if we believe in God's forgiveness, Christ's example, the Golden Rule &/ or Unconditional Love.

Based on Father Dennis Holstschnieder, CM, October 4, 2008 Address to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Atlantic, Georgia.



Restorative Justice

Mail: Office of the Governor, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814
 Email. Go to the following website to send a message to the Governor www.gov.ca.gov/interact



BILL NO.	AUTHOR	TITLE & SUMMARY	STATUS
↑ AB 360	Carter (D -)	Juvenile Court Law - purpose – authorizes a county to adopt a restorative justice program to address the needs of minors, victims and community.	Gov's Desk VETO
ⓧ AB 1996	Swanson (D-Oakland)	Food Stamps: eligibility: drug felonies – expands eligibility for food stamp benefits to convicted felons who have distributed controlled substances and provides proof of eligibility criteria.	Gov's Desk VETO
ⓧ AB 2043	Spitzer (R-Orange)	Crime victims' memorial – would authorize the Crime Victims' Memorial Foundation, upon its establishment, to plan and construct a memorial on the capitol grounds to honor residents who are victims' of crime.	Gov's Desk SIGNED
ⓧ AB 2099	Hancock (D-Berkeley)	Parole: juveniles and adults – would create a pilot program at Folsom State Prison and San Quentin Prison, which would provide that prior to each juvenile and adult being released on parole, CDCR shall take steps to ensure that each parolee successfully obtains a valid CA identification card.	Gov's Desk VETO
ⓧ AB 2252	DeSaulnier (D-Martinez)	Youth Policy: - would establish the CA Commission on Youth to examine and discuss policy and fiscal issues affecting the interests, needs and conditions of the youth of ..	Gov's Desk Unclear
ⓧ AB 2809	Leno (D-San Francisco)	Crime Victims: mental health counseling – would make a minor who suffers emotional injury as a result of witnessing a violent crime eligible for compensation for mental health counseling.	Gov's Desk Unclear
ⓧ SB 1250	Yee (D-San Francisco)	Juveniles: communications – would require DJJ to provide greater communication services between incarcerated youth and their families.	Gov's Desk Unclear
ⓧ SB 1701	Romero (D-)	Sentencing: - would repeal the provision that places the choice of the triad of terms in the sound discretion of the court and would make alternative provisions on Jan. 1, 2011.	Gov's Desk Unclear



Dear Community and Faith-Based Leaders,

Faith-based and community organizations stand at the front lines of the fight against homelessness, working each day to move Americans from the streets to shelter and stability. The need is great, but there is reason for great encouragement: *America's "armies of compassion" are making progress many never thought possible.*

Data released this week reveals that the number of chronically homeless individuals was *cut by nearly 30 percent from 2005 to 2007*. That means more than 50,000 Americans who consistently slept on the streets in 2005 had a roof over their heads in 2007. Overall numbers of homelessness dropped significantly, as well. As one researcher from the Urban Institute described, this achievement is "nothing short of phenomenal."

Much of this success is due to the countless individuals serving in America's faith-based and community organizations. Partnerships between the Federal government and grassroots nonprofits to address pressing human needs have expanded greatly over the past seven years. The number of grants to these groups through the Continuum of Care alone rose from 1,404 in 2001 to 3,494 in 2007. States and cities have also expanded similar partnerships using Federal funding. Each of these partners has been vital in our Nation's efforts to bring help and hope into the lives of those in need.

President Bush has set the goal of ending chronic homelessness—and the success of America's armies of compassion shows that this is possible. As you continue to build on this success, we encourage you to make use of the resources described below to grow the impact of your work.