

## Special Honors in the Fall River Council

The Greater Attleboro District was recently included in a Volunteer Day Celebration conducted by Sturdy Memorial Hospital Volunteer & Student Services. The program included a ceremony at Attleboro City Hall conducted by Attleboro Mayor Kevin Dumas. More than 46 agencies in the Greater Attleboro area were presented with proclamations from the local Congressional delegation, the State House of Representatives and State Senate, the Municipal Council and The City of Attleboro. Twelve SVDP symbols/ornaments carrying the name and number of volunteers of the 12 conferences in the District were displayed on a Caring Tree in Attleboro City Hall. Ms. Vivian Dugas, a member of St. Stephen's Conference, represented the District at the ceremony and the luncheon that followed.

The Fall River, Ma. Diocesan Newspaper, *The Anchor*, honors individuals as Living Stones, Anchor Person of the Week. In March they chose Irene Frechette of Attleboro, a Vincentian for more than 35 years and former conference president. Irene is quoted in the article as saying "Giving back to others is something we truly believe in. There is great satisfaction in it...It's easy to see the face of Jesus in those we help...We must help those that are struggling because in doing so we are doing the work of Jesus here on earth. That's our mission."



A Mass of Thanksgiving at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption in Fall River, Massachusetts, honored Cardinal Sean O'Malley. On behalf of the faithful of the Diocese of Fall River, his Excellency the Most Reverend George W. Coleman, Bishop of Fall River, joyfully extended to His Eminence Sean Cardinal O'Malley, OFM Cap., a warm "welcome home" to the Diocese of Fall River. At the reception that followed, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, represented by Armand Frechette (Diocesan Vice President) and Ronald Correia (President) presented the Ozanam Medal to Cardinal Sean.

## VOP Committee

### Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York

Our Voice of the Poor Committee was begun in 2003 and its chairperson is a member of the Diocesan Council's Board of Directors, an indication of the importance given to this initiative.

Our mission has been two-fold. The first is to educate our members concerning the importance of addressing the root causes of social injustice and to make it possible for them to participate easily in contacting those who have the power to correct those injustices.

The second is for the VOP committee to act as a pro-active liaison with elected officials and other local organizations, particularly Catholic Charities, and engage in activities which address justice issues. Some projects have included letter-writing as well as personal visits to legislators.

To accomplish these goals, VOP representatives have spoken personally at numerous meetings of all four of our District Councils. We have provided each Conference with pamphlets containing contact information concerning all of our area's elected officials. Additionally, materials are sent periodically to conference presidents on issues of importance. We have also begun a VOP newsletter that is sent quarterly to all conferences updating them on important issues as well as providing them with background information concerning the role of social justice in the Society and in the Church. All members have been urged to join the New York State Catholic Advocacy Network which provides an easy method to become informed and to contact legislators.

Committee members have also attended numerous conferences and programs among which are: the Catholic Social Ministries Gatherings in Washington, D.C., annual lobbying days in the state capital with other Catholic groups interested in social justice, and programs sponsored by the Vincentian Center for Church and Society at St. John's University.

Most especially, we have forged a closer relationship with Catholic Charities and their Public Policy Education Network and have frequently used their research on many local issues, particularly affordable housing, immigration, and racism. We co-sponsored a program on racism with Catholic Charities.

Our Committee also presented a program on the Voice of the Poor initiative at the Northeast Regional Meeting held on Long Island in 2005, and we will offer a workshop on Voice of the Poor at our own Ozanam Day this Fall.

While successes come slowly, we are especially pleased that the issue of affordable housing has gained momentum as we join our voice with that of many other local groups in publicizing its importance.