

MIDEAST VOICES



Mideast Voice of the Poor, Columbus, OH

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Welcome Back!

By Warren Wright

Welcome to the second edition of *Mideast Voices*. In this issue, we begin our examination of the documents of Catholic Social Teaching by presenting the key elements of Pope Leo XIII's 1891 document *Rerum Novarum*. The document is the cornerstone of Catholic Social Teaching, as many of the future writings (*Quadragesimo Annos* (1931), *Mater et Magistra* (1961), *Pacem en Terris* (1963) and more) are indexed to it. Please consider using this and future write-ups for spiritual reflection at your conference meetings.

Our US Congress and state legislatures are back in session and have key decisions to make on issues effecting those we serve. Information about Medicaid Expansion, the Circle of Protection around programs effecting those we serve, and immigration reform is contained within. The 2013 Catholic Social Ministry Gathering (CSMG) will be taking place in Washington, DC from Feb 10 through 13. Those in attendance will be advocating on Capitol Hill on Feb 12 for the Circle of Protection and Immigration Reform. Our state governors and legislatures will be deciding over the next few months on whether to include Medicaid Expansion in state budgets. If it is not included, a large

Examining *Rerum Novarum*

By Warren Wright, Mary Beth Auletto and Deb Zabloudil

Rerum Novarum (*The Condition of Labor*) was issued by Pope Leo XIII in May 1891. It can be considered the cornerstone of Catholic Social Teaching. Times were turbulent when the document was issued: the Industrial Revolution was in full swing in Europe and America, leading to lower standards of living for many workers as they moved from agrarian activities into factories for the production of goods. Concurrently, employers' and owners' standards of living were on the rise. Marxist revolutionary thought and agitation was on the rise in response to the gulf between rich and poor. For more

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number of our less fortunate brothers and sisters will remain without health care coverage as the Affordable Care Act is more fully implemented. It is crucial that we make our voice heard at this time to our federal and state leaders. Stay tuned for future communication about post-CSMG visits in your areas to your federal leaders as well as lobbying efforts to your state leaders. As we approach the season of Lent, information about CRS Rice Bowl is presented. CRS Rice Bowl is a wonderful way to embrace the spirit of Lent in solidarity with our less fortunate brothers and sisters.

Enjoy the items in this issue. We welcome your questions and comments as well as contributions about VOP activities occurring in your area for future editions. Our next *Mideast Voices* will appear in early May 2013.

on the historical context of *Rerum Novarum*, please visit [Roundtable](#) by the Association of Catholic Diocesan Social Action Directors.

Rerum Novarum consists of 45 numbered paragraphs. Its focus is to provide an answer to "the social question", "the relative rights and the mutual duties of the wealthy and of the poor, of capital and of labor"(paragraph 1). Leo XIII cautions that the discussion is not easy, but that there are "principles which truth and justice dictate for its settlement"(paragraph 1). The document seeks to bring to light these principles. (For the complete text of *Rerum Novarum* on page 4

Go and Share Good News

By Beth and Gary Schwarzmueller

Advocates: Would you like information to help you be a more effective Voice for the Poor? St. Paul the Apostle is hosting a three-part series – *Go and Announce the Gospel*. Strengthen your skills in putting your faith into action – in your family, in your parish, in your work, and in your community. Join others to be inspired about the connection between our faith and action for charity and justice. Mark your calendar for this April series and plan to bring a friend. Each session is scheduled 6:30 to 8:00 PM (refreshments at 6:15) in Miller Hall of St. Paul the Apostle School, 313 N. State Street, Westerville, 43082. St. Paul's also has a Sunday evening liturgy at 5:00 PM, which is a great way to begin these evening sessions.

"What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like." Saint Augustine

Topics and speakers are:

April 7th, Immigration Reform, Angela Johnston, Director of Latino Ministry, Diocese of Columbus

April 14th, Human Trafficking, Theresa Flores, Author and Trafficking Survivor

April 21st, Hunger, Matt Habash, Chief Executive Officer, Mid-Ohio Foodbank

CRS Rice Bowl Brings Faith to Life During Lent

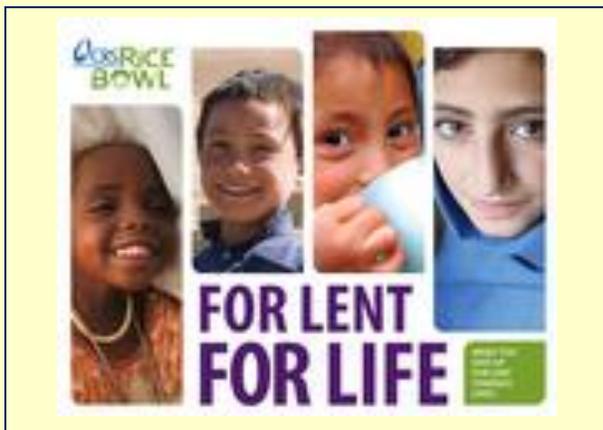
By Susan Walters

As Catholics the world over respond to the Church's call to renewal in the Year of Faith, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) invites you to answer the Gospel's call to love your neighbor. With CRS Rice Bowl, newly redesigned to enrich your Lenten observance, you can experience Lent for life, a deeper relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

CRS Rice Bowl, now in its 38th year, invites Catholics in the United States to end hunger at home and overseas and grow in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need by engaging in the Lenten triad of prayer, fasting,

and giving. This year, CRS Rice Bowl focuses on five countries where CRS serves, and one diocese in the U.S. Participants can participate as individuals, families, groups, or entire parishes, with materials designed specifically for each. Together, you can:

- **Pray**, focusing on global needs;
- **Fast** or give things up, turning your sacrifice into an act of solidarity with those who have far less;
- **Learn**, engaging in lessons, designed for all ages, about the global community and the challenges of hunger and poverty around the world; and
- **Give**, through the vehicle of the simple bowl at the center of the program. Put your pocket change or the money saved by fasting or another Lenten sacrifice into the Rice Bowl. Turning the money in at the end of Lent through your parish or school, or through the CRS Rice Bowl website, www.crsricebowl.org.



Please see *CRS Rice Bowl* on page 5

Hunger and Poverty in Central Ohio

By Rebecca Clark, Cathie McClary and Deb Zabloudil

I was surprised to read in the most recent issue of *Live United*, (United Way of Central Ohio's newsletter) that "Columbus ranks #1 in poverty when compared to 15 similar metropolitan areas across the country. . ." Does that surprise you, too? In Franklin County, according to the article, "more than 200,000 people live in poverty. Another 231,000 people struggle to meet their basic needs." Poverty is growing, not just in the city, but in the suburbs and surrounding counties, too. Did you know that "in just two years, a Worthington food pantry went from serving an average [of] 20 families a month to 300 families a month"?

In Fairfield County (a neighboring county to Franklin County) poverty and hunger are also on the rise. Data from the Ohio Department of Development states that 25.3% of county residents are living below 200% of the poverty level. Since 2007, Food Stamp (SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) participation has increased 91% and in the past three (3) years, household income has dropped by \$4,300. As a direct result, Food Pantries in the area have



For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me . . . Matthew 25: 35

been serving more people. In 2012, the Lutheran Social Services pantry noted an 8% increase in individuals served over 2011; Lancaster's St. Vincent de Paul Conference saw a 20% increase in the number of households requesting monthly food in December 2012 over December 2011.

In response to the increase needs of Fairfield County, an active Hunger Summit, consisting of local food pantries and other community organizations (including United Way of Fairfield County, Fairfield County 211 and the Mid-Ohio Food Bank) has been formed. The Summit allows local pantries to work together to meet as much need as possible through coordinated efforts and a shared

Please see *Hunger* on page 4

News from the States

Kentucky: In the fall issue of Kentucky's Catholic Conference newsletter, *Witness*, the Conference outlined its areas for advocacy in the upcoming General Assembly: a) A state Religious Freedom Restoration Act, b) Abolition of the death penalty and institution of life without parole as the maximum penalty for capital murder, and c) Medicaid Expansion so more than 300,000 Kentuckians have health insurance. You will find an [online copy](#) of the newsletter on the Catholic Conference of Kentucky's web site.

Indiana: In the latest issue of the Indiana Catholic Conference's newsletter, they discussed legislation that is currently moving through the state legislature. An issue that all states will be facing is the implementation of Health Insurance Exchanges and Medicaid Expansion as part of the Affordable Care Act. From Indiana's newsletter:

"The issue of the Affordable Care Act and its

implementation was the topic of HB 1319, Health benefit exchange provisions. Indiana to this point has decided not to establish a state health insurance exchange; consequently, the Federal government will provide this service. HB 1319 requires the insurance programs offered in the Federal exchange to comply with the insurance regulations and expectations as all other Indiana insurance providers. . .

"A larger question is what to do about several hundred thousand people who will not have health insurance coverage next year unless Indiana changes its Medicaid coverage. Representative Ed DeLaney (D – Indianapolis) offered an amendment for Indiana to expand its coverage as recommended in the ACA. However, the committee decided that because this was a budget issue, it should be taken up in the Ways and Means Committee.

Please see *States* on page 4

Rerum Novarum from page 1

[Rerum Novarum](#) in English, please visit the Vatican web site.)

Before you start reading the synopsis in the attached newsletter supplement, consider saying the Prayer for Systemic Change on page 5. Ponder the following questions as you read and consider using *Rerum Novarum*, and these questions for spiritual reflection at one of your conference meetings.

INDIVIDUAL & FAMILY RIGHTS & RELATIONS: Pope Leo writes in favor of private ownership over socialism; certainly his reflection is determined in large part about

States from page 3

In addition, many people now covered in Indiana's HIP, which targets those who are not eligible for Medicaid but without the means or opportunity to buy health insurance, will be without coverage upon implementation of ACA next year. Support to purchase insurance on the exchange at reduced rates depending on income begins at 100% of poverty. Indiana's Medicaid program covers pregnancy and those who are under 27% of poverty, leaving a large gap. As health care is a fundamental need of all persons, ICC is supportive of expanding coverage and finding a way to provide for lower income families who work in places without insurance and others who have no options for insurance coverage."

Hunger from page 3

As Voice of the Poor members, what do we need to be doing, not just to feed the poor, but to examine and work to solve the root causes that are precipitating the rise in poverty and hunger? Do we know what the root causes are? Access to jobs with living wages, access to a quality education, housing and health care are all issues that need to be examined. Beyond the issues, what can we do individually and together to bring about systemic change so that hunger and poverty are no longer on the rise? And most importantly, what can we do

what was happening during that time period. Do you think our country's current system of private ownership is what he envisioned? How does it support his vision that private property is the best way for parents to support their families?

SOCIETAL RELATIONSHIPS: "The richer population have many ways of protecting themselves, and stand in less need of help from the State; those who are badly off have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly rely on the assistance of the state". Do you think the average Christian/Catholic would agree with this statement? What if it meant their taxes would have to go up? How is this challenging to you in your work with the poor?

MICHIGAN: The Michigan Catholic Conference Board of Directors has unanimously approved the Conference's advocacy priorities for the 96th Michigan Legislature. These priorities target nine categories: a) religious liberty, b) human life and dignity, c) education, d) children and families, e) health care, f) economic justice and regulatory policies, g) restorative justice, h) immigration, i) federal issues. The Michigan Catholic Conference's legislative priorities are not a catalog of the Conference's position on every important issue that may arise over the next two years. Rather, they are intended to communicate a sense of what state government's top priorities should be to foster the common good.

OHIO: The Columbus Diocese Voice of the Poor, along with members of the Diocesan Office for Social Concerns is hosting an advocacy training day at our March meeting on Saturday, March 16, 2013 at 9:30 a.m. at St. Paul's in Westerville. Discussion of the issues as well as tips for advocacy will be discussed. Watch your email for more information.

to empower the poor find their voices so they can begin advocating for needed change themselves?

Let us know what you are doing in your states and local conferences to bring about systemic change. Even if you are just taking the first steps, we want to know what you are doing to examine the problems and advocate for change. Together, we will make a difference in the lives of the poor we serve.

CRS Rice Bowl from page 2

This year's program features a new interactive website, with the opportunity to register your rice bowl online and link it to your parish or school. By registering a Rice Bowl users will have their bowl and thousands of others across America appear on a participation map.

Registrants will receive weekly e-mail reflections during the weeks of Lent and have the opportunity to follow the program through social media, allowing for an increasingly rich, continuous and fulfilling Lenten journey.

Did you know?

While 75 percent of CRS Rice Bowl contributions support Catholic Relief Services' programs around the world, 25 percent remains in the United States to fund local efforts to prevent hunger and poverty.

Don't forget to visit the [CRS Rice Bowl website](#), too!

Current Issues of Note

By Warren Wright

Medicaid Expansion: On June 28, 2012 the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act but it also held that expanding Medicaid in 2014 is not mandatory. As of this ruling, it is a choice that states can opt into or out of. This can be devastating for those living in lower socioeconomic circumstances who counted upon this coverage for their families.

Nevertheless, the Court ruled that the expansion itself is constitutional, and the Gospel declares that it is the right and just thing to do. Tragically, since the Supreme Court decision, some governors have announced that they will not expand Medicaid in their state. Others remain quiet because they fear political consequences in this election year.

The reality is that, if a state doesn't expand Medicaid in 2014, there will be no valid health insurance option for many low-income people who earn between 100 and 138% of the national poverty level. (About \$22,000 – \$29,000 for a family of four). Under the expansion, these people would have had coverage.

PRAYER FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE:

We praise and thank you, O God, Creator of the Universe. You have made all things good and have given us the earth to cultivate. Grant that we may always use created things gratefully, and share them generously with those in need. Give us creativity in helping the poor meet their basic human needs. Open our minds and hearts so that we might stand at their side and assist them to change whatever unjust structures keep them poor. Enable us to be brothers and sisters to them, friends who walk with them in their struggle for fundamental human rights. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

From: National Voice of the Poor

Michigan has not decided on Medicaid Expansion. Kentucky is going ahead with it. Indiana is not as of now. The Indiana governor did not have it in his state budget. Ohio is on the fence but we will know for certain when the governor presents his budget on February 4.

Opting in to the Medicaid expansion will provide coverage for roughly 500,000 uninsured Ohioans at no cost to the state of Ohio for three years. After that, the federal share will decrease to 90% by 2020 – a significantly greater federal share than that for the existing Medicaid program. Co-Chair Mark Davis stated, "This new research* reinforces our belief that Medicaid expansion can be implemented in Ohio in a way that will strengthen the health and economic security of communities in Ohio, especially for families who don't get coverage through work or can't afford it on their own. It will also create over 30,000 new health care jobs in the state of Ohio by 2022."

Similar results would also be expected in Indiana, Kentucky, and Michigan.

* January 2013 report, Health Policy Institute of Ohio, The Ohio State University, the Urban Institute, and Regional Economic Models, Inc.

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Voice of the Poor (VOP) Voice of the Poor does not take positions for or against a political party or individual candidates. However, Voice of the Poor is interested in working with those elected officials, whether Republicans or Democrats, who support initiatives that will benefit the poor, children, elderly, immigrants – documented or not, and all of those who SVdP cares for and serves.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform: During the week of January 28th, eight senators released their “[Bipartisan Framework for Comprehensive Immigration Reform](#).” President Obama released his “[principles for commonsense immigration reform](#).” We are heartened to see some bipartisan movement that includes support for a pathway to earned citizenship for the undocumented immigrants currently in the United States. Both plans also prioritize keeping families together. Continue to stay informed with the current status of legislation and learn more about the Church’s teaching on immigration reform through the [US Conference of Catholic Bishops web site](#). Let your senators and representatives know that you support comprehensive immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship by using the St. Vincent de Paul or the USCCB Capwiz sites. (Thanks also to [Network, A Catholic Social Justice Lobby](#) for current information and links to the above documents.)

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://www.vincentianvoice.org/voceofpoor.html>

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