

# MIDEAST VOICES



Mideast Voice of the Poor, Columbus, OH

<http://www.vincentianvoice.org/voiceofpoor.html> Email: [colsvop@gmail.com](mailto:colsvop@gmail.com)

## Welcome to the Mideast VOP newsletter

By Warren Wright

Dear Vincentians and Friends,

Welcome to this inaugural edition of the SVDP Mideast Region Voice of the Poor (VOP) Newsletter. This newsletter is being published to make Mideast VOP Vincentians and friends aware of current and upcoming VOP activities in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Michigan. Our intent is to publish the newsletter on a quarterly basis (January, April, July and October of each year). Most of the specific events and activities reported in this first edition are from Ohio. We encourage our VOP reps in Indiana, Kentucky, and Michigan to forward information for future editions to Deb Zabloudil at [debzabloudil@gmail.com](mailto:debzabloudil@gmail.com) and Warren Wright at [joannwarrenwright@yahoo.com](mailto:joannwarrenwright@yahoo.com).

As people of faith, we guide our VOP activities using sacred scripture and tradition. An important part of Catholic tradition is Catholic Social Teaching (CST). This first newsletter contains an overview of CST, starting with Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (The Condition of Labor), and extending to Pope Benedict XVI's 2009 *Caritas en Veritate* (Charity in Truth). In each subsequent newsletter, we will focus on a specific encyclical, starting with *Rerum Novarum* in January 2013.

The SVDP Voice of the Poor has taken positions on 11 issues that impact those we serve. They are affordable housing, circle of protection for the poor and vulnerable, education, health care, homelessness, human trafficking, hunger, immigration, predatory lending, restorative justice, and wages. Our advocacy efforts at the

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Welcome	1
VOP Members Lobby for Social Justice	2
Prayer for Systemic Change	2
Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching	3
Two U.S. Bishops issue St. Vincent de Paul feast day statement	3
Tools for Advocacy	4
Spotlight On . . .	5
Current Issues of Note	6

local, state and national levels focus on these issues. The position papers can be accessed at [www.svdpusa.org/members/ProgramsandTools/VoiceofthePoor](http://www.svdpusa.org/members/ProgramsandTools/VoiceofthePoor). In order to act on these issues nationally, we encourage all members to register with CapWiz. CapWiz can be accessed at the same website above.

Finally, the SVDP National President, Sheila Gilbert, is guiding the Society to embrace systemic change activities in an effort to help raise those we serve out of poverty. It is hoped that SVDP can work with existing congregation-based community organizing groups and funders like the Catholic Campaign for Human Development in efforts to see those we serve become agents of their own change.

We look forward to your comments on this first Mideast VOP newsletter. We welcome your input for future editions. This newsletter is meant for ALL Mideast VOP Vincentians in efforts to educate and empower ourselves and our conferences.

Peace,

Warren Wright  
Mideast VOP Regional Representative  
Diocesan Council of Columbus VOP Chair

## VOP Members Lobby for Social Justice

By John Schechter, Gary Schwarzmueller and Mary Beth Auletto

Members of the Diocese of Columbus SVDP Voice of the Poor (VOP) committee met recently at the office of U.S. Congressman Steve Stivers (OH – 15<sup>th</sup> District) to push for legislation and governmental action to better address the needs of the poor and downtrodden. On August 8<sup>th</sup>, VOP chairperson Warren Wright, along with VOP members Karen Dickman and John Schechter, met with staffers at Congressman Steve Stivers' office in Hilliard, Ohio. After making introductory comments about SVDP and the overall policies of the U.S. Catholic bishops regarding social justice, Warren spoke about the pending Farm Bill which, despite its name, has provisions for urban and inner-city citizens as well as the agricultural community. Karen gave a presentation on Immigration, noting that fair immigration policies are needed, especially for the children of immigrants who are born in the U.S. and are thus U.S. citizens despite any controversy over their parents' legal status. Also, John talked to Steve Stivers' staffers on the necessity of always keeping in mind the hungry and those in poverty while making every legislative budget decision such as with the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit. The conversation between the VOP members and Stivers' staff was professional and courteous, and the VOP members believe that they developed significant rapport with Stivers' staff which will be beneficial in any future lobbying sessions.

On June 19, 2012, Warren Wright, Annelle Garcia, Maureen Malek, and Beth and Gary Schwarzmueller visited the office of U.S. Congressman Pat Tiberi (OH – 12<sup>th</sup> District) to discuss the needs of the poor. The group discussed the March 6, 2012 letter from Bishops Blaire and Pates to members of the House of Representatives with Mr. Tiberi's assistant, Mr. Walter Taylor. Specific issues discussed included the farm bill (and concerns that SNAP funds would be reduced), immigration reform, housing programs, and international humanitarian relief and development. There was a frank exchange of ideas and Mr. Taylor promised to forward our concerns to Mr. Tiberi.

Inspired by other advocates from Voice of the Poor, Mary Beth Auletto scheduled a visit with Congressman Patrick Tiberi on September 19<sup>th</sup>. Six women who reside in his district and attend Church of the Resurrection visited with Tiberi. All shared personal stories from their work, volunteering, and personal lives about the impact of decreasing support for the poor and for education. They also shared their concerns about the current House budget proposal. Congressman Tiberi responded by talking about his concerns about federal debt and the lack of leadership currently to work together to agree on a budget. He also talked at length about his concerns about Medicaid and healthcare. As the "advocacy tips" article pointed out, politicians are very good at controlling the conversation! When Mary Beth pointed out that the current House budget called for significant decreases in spending on education and social programs, Tiberi responded that there was still more work to be done on it. Mary Beth gave him a copy of "Network Mutuality: Voter Discernment" (from the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center, handed out at the last Voice of the Poor meeting). Congressman Tiberi is an active Catholic and so we used that commonality to remind him about our belief that the needs of the poor must come first. The advocates also told him we would pray for him and all our leaders. Advocacy about the budget will definitely need to continue after the November 2012 election.

### **PRAYER FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE:**

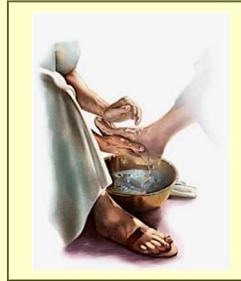
*We praise and thank you, O God, Creator of the Universe. You have made all things good and have given us the earth to cultivate. Grant that we may always use created things gratefully, and share them generously with those in need. Give us creativity in helping the poor meet their basic human needs. 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*

## Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

By Deb Zabloudil

One of the Catholic Church's greatest treasures is its social teachings. Surprisingly, few Catholics are aware of "our best kept secret." Seven themes run through these teachings, which we'll cover in this issue of *Mideast Voices*. In future issues, we will cover some of the papal documents from which these themes are derived.



*I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. John 13:15*

1. **Life and Dignity of the Human Person** – *"The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching."*\*
2. **Call to Family, Community and Participation** – *"The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community."*\*
3. **Rights and Responsibilities** – *"The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society."*\*

Please see *Catholic Teaching* on page 4

## Two U.S. Bishops issue St. Vincent de Paul feast day statement

By Deb Zabloudil

On September 27, 2012, Cardinal Timothy Dolan (New York) and Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio (Brooklyn) issued a statement reminding us that much needs to be done to champion the cause of the poor in the United States. Income disparity continues to exist throughout the United States with significant numbers of individuals and families still struggling to eat, keep roofs over their heads and find employment with living wages. Service agencies, including St. Vincent de Paul, are providing "enormous support to poor Americans." This is not enough, according to Dolan and DeMarzio, and their joint statement makes two important points:

- 1) *[The help of these agencies] is not enough. Even with the generosity of the American people, and the work of groups like the Saint Vincent de Paul Society and so many others, much more needs*

*to be done, and not just by private charity. The government must continue to play its part as well.*

- 2) *There are very dark clouds. Too much rhetoric in the country portrays poor people in a very negative way. At the same time, this persistent sluggish economic and slow pace of recovery does two things that hurt the poor: it does not provide sufficient jobs for poor people to earn decent living to support themselves, and it provides less resources for government to do its part for Americans in need.*

*This is creating a situation that is devastating to struggling families throughout the country.*

Please see *Feast Day* on page 4

## Tools for Advocacy

The Catholic Conferences of the Mideast region are excellent resources to get you started with political advocacy. They will walk you through Catholic teachings, issues that are dominant in your state, and updates on national issues. Check out the Catholic Conference web sites listed below:

[Indiana Catholic Conference](#)

[Catholic Conference of Kentucky](#)

[Michigan Catholic Conference](#)

[Catholic Conference of Ohio](#)

*"What an exciting adventure! God has chosen you and me to be his hands and feet, to go about the world doing good and to have a wonderful time of it."*

*Fr. Jonathan Morris*

*Catholic Teaching* from page 3

4. **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable** – *"A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment ([Mt 25:31-46](#)) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.\*"*
5. **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers** – *"The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected.\*"*
6. **Solidarity** – *"We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace.\*"*
7. **Care for God's Creation** – *"We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith.\*"*

*–Seeking Charity and Justice–*

Remember to use the [St. Vincent de Paul Capwiz](#) site, too. Sample letters are available that you can edit to make more personal are available for you to send to your US Representative, US Senators and President. The USCCB [Faithful Citizenship](#) document is a useful tool for helping Catholics weigh current political issues in light of the Church teaching. If you have not already read it, take the time to do so. Even after the election, you will find the document

Remember, we are the Voice of the Poor. If we cannot find our voice, how can we help the poor find theirs?

*Feast Day* from page 3

Ultimately, they remind us that our work as Vincentians is not done and that our advocacy work as the Voice of the Poor is needed more than ever, *"There is too much finger pointing and not enough joining hands. Solidarity is critical to ensure the dignity of all."* We will continue to advocate for the dignity of all those with whom we work. A link to the complete statement is available on the [Archdiocese of New York web site](#).

The Bishops remind us that their summary is only a starting point for those of us interested in learning more about "our best-kept secret." We can begin by reading papal documents, documents issued from Vatican councils, and statements issued by the [U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops](#).

## Spotlight On. . .

### St. Francis de Sales Conference (Newark OH)

Lesha Farias (president of and home visitor for the St. Vincent de Paul Society conference at St. Francis de Sales in Newark) is fortunate to have a full time job that permits her to also be a community organizer doing local social justice work. With Ohio Campus Compact she coordinates the Connect2Complete program working with 3 community colleges in Ohio to combine peer advocates and community-engaged learning in developmental education and college success courses. As a community organizer in Licking County she works with multiple groups around issues of food access, public transportation, poverty alleviation, and community building and empowerment. She currently serves as president of the board of the new local nonprofit, Sixth Street and Growing, where the focus is not only on starting gardens for growing organic vegetables and donating extra produce to the local food pantries, but also to build up blighted neighborhoods and forgotten communities and get people working together across all lines of race, class, gender, and generation. It has been a powerful example of what we can do to change our

communities at the local level and to teach people how to work together to make change happen. As a proponent of St. Vincent de Paul's new focus on advocacy, Lesha encourages all Vincentians to become more embedded in their local communities beyond their work in their own Catholic church, to learn how policy and legislative decisions are made, and to respectfully involve the people we serve as change agents in addressing the very conditions that keep generations of people in poverty.

### St. Paul Conference (Westerville OH)

**By: Beth Schwarzmuller**

Inspired by VOP newsletters from the Western Region that reminded readers that education is key to effective advocacy, SVDP Voice of the Poor members of St. Paul the Apostle in Westerville and pastoral associate, Susan Bellotti, are working together to create an adult faith series on important issues of social concern; immigration, trafficking, poverty, etc. MARK YOUR CALENDARS for a three part Adult Faith Series on Issues of Social Concern beginning Divine Mercy Sunday, April 7, 2013, 6:30 to 8:00 PM and continuing on April 14th and 21st. We welcome all visitors.

## Current Issues of Note

By Deb Zabloudil and Warren Wright

**Farm Bill** – This summer, the Senate passed its version of The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 (S. 3240), the “Farm Bill,” to replace the 2008 version that expired on September 30<sup>th</sup>. The House Agriculture Committee drafted its own version of the bill with deeper cuts, but the House of Representatives did not take up either bill prior to the Congressional recess. A continuing resolution has funded the bill for one year. The USCCB and Sheila Gilbert, national President of St. Vincent de Paul and have asked us to advocate on behalf of passage of a bill that protects the needs of those living in poverty with continuation SNAP and TEFAP funding and protection of small farmers by conserving subsidies and crop insurance. The Senate version of the bill has \$4 billion in SNAP cuts while the House bill has \$16 billion. For more information and a sample letter, please check the [SVdP Capwiz advocacy site](#) for more information.

*Are you smart enough to be poor?*

Check out <http://www.playspent.org>

*Let us know how if you were successful.*

**Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)** – The U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means has proposed repealing funding for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). These funds help provide services to the disabled, the homeless, the elderly, victims of abuse, and other marginalized members of our community — in other words, the very people we serve every day. Once again, Sheila Gilbert, national President of St. Vincent de Paul has asked us to advocate to reject the repeal proposal. For more information and a sample letter, please check the [SVdP Capwiz advocacy site](#) for more information.

**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.



Voice of the Poor - Columbus OH  
 Next meeting: Saturday, November 10, 2012  
 10:00 a.m. - noon  
 Place: Church of the Resurrection, New Albany OH

From left to right (back row): Gary Schwarzmueller, Mary Beth Auletto, Jim Emley, Warren Wright, John Schechter, Deb Zabloudil, Annelle Garcia

(front row): Beth Scharzmueller, Michael Kopczewski, Elaine Damo, Becky Clark, Cathie McClary, Maureen Malek

(not pictured): Ed Malek, our eager photographer

---

*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

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

---

Voice of the Poor  
 c/o Deb Zabloudil  
 710 Winsholen Court  
 Westerville, OH 43081-3769

