



The Voice

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Newsletter

Columbus Diocese

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President's Message

Bill Sparks

No Lazy Summer days for Vincentians.

Congratulations to all on a productive and rewarding summer for Vincentians in the Columbus diocese. In addition to the vital work in your conferences, this



issue reports on the successful events at the diocesan level. Three members of our Voice of the Poor committee: Jody Stahr, Leshia Farias and Warren Wright, traveled to St. Louis to participate in a **three day seminar** on systemic change. At the well attended and dynamically presented August 25 **Day of Recollection**, Marge McGinley laid a crucial foundation stone for promoting systemic change. The foundation stone is learning how to discern whether or not we are called as individuals and conferences to participate in the efforts toward systemic change. Bishop Campbell offered encouraging remarks to start our most successful and well attended fifth annual **Friends of the Poor Walk** on September 28. Coughlin Motor Group has provided funding to support us in getting furniture from the Central Ohio Furniture Bank. Our **Voice of the Poor Committee** is busy with a grant process through Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) for a program to help those we serve to build community action groups to take charge of advocating for change of systems which adversely affect them. After difficult negotiations we can, starting October 21,

use the kitchen over the Haven to provide more nutritious diversity in the St. Lawrence Haven menu. The **Clothing Distribution Center** will now be open on Wednesday mornings as well as Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Last, but far from least, is the addition of our tenth Youth Conference: St. Mary, Delaware.

We are completing a full year delivering **The VOICE** by email. Money saved on postage has gone directly to the needs of those we serve. But is the email VOICE heard? Each month many of us receive via email several high quality newsletters from worthy organizations. Unfortunately, electronic newsletters are very easy to set aside. Despite good intentions we never get back to them because of the flood of new emails. **The VOICE** is a tool for fostering the sense that all Vincentians in the Columbus Diocese are a community working together to grow spiritually by performing the corporeal and spiritual works of mercy. Community is fostered by information from the Diocesan Council about the events and plans for the whole diocese. Of equal importance is sharing of ideas and activities from the conferences.

The Diocesan Council will be evaluating the effectiveness of **The VOICE** as well as exploring other means of communication used to create a sense of community. For instance, we are planning a **webinar** for conference presidents. Vincentians throughout the diocese should participate in this evaluation of how we can improve what we are doing. In your conferences discuss what subjects would be most useful to you to be discussed in the webinar. Send your comments to me (wbsparks@me.com) or if related to **The VOICE** to Charles Kielkopf (kielkopf.1@osu.edu).

Mark Your Calendar! Save these dates!

November 2, Ozanam Orientation

Newark, St Francis de Sales: Call 614-221-3554 for information and to make reservations.

November 6-10, Invitation for Renewal

Seton Cove, Indianapolis, Call Bill Sparks (614-439-0038) for more information.

November 9, Ozanam Orientation

Marion, St. Mary Church: Call 614-221-3554 for information and to make reservations.

December 2, Bishop's Appreciation Mass

St. Joseph Cathedral, 6:30 PM

Report on Our Day of Recollection

The 2013 Day of Recollection was Sunday, August 25, at the Martin de Porres Center, Ohio Dominican University. Over 100 Vincentians representing 29 conferences attended. The facilitator was Marge McGinley. Marge is National SVdP's Goal Leader for development of spirituality and leadership formation in promotion of systemic change.



Marge McGinley focused on discernment processes for individuals, conferences and councils on whether and how to participate in systemic change.

What is systemic change? There is systemic change **for** individuals and systemic change **of** social systems. Systemic change **for** individuals is guiding individuals and families out of the system of poverty in which they now live towards living a better life. (It is what Jody Stahr identifies as "bottom up" systemic change in her report on the Systemic Change Seminar.) Systemic change **of** social systems is working politically to change systems such as immigration laws which adversely affect the poor. The

systemic change being promoted by the National office is systemic change **for** individuals. This type of systemic change requires Vincentians through their conferences becoming mentors to those we serve. For Vincentians, systemic change **of** social systems is done through the advocacy work of the Voice of the Poor.

It was an interactive day where the Vincentians present practiced suggested discernment procedures about how systemic change might work in their local conferences and councils. They also rehearsed discerning whether or not they were being called to being mentors as well as providers of necessities.

Fr. Charlie Klinger, diocesan council spiritual advisor, closed the 2013 Day of Recollection with celebration of mass in the chapel of the Mother House of the Dominican Sisters of Peace.

Report on Friends of the Poor Walk

Over five hundred Vincentians from at least thirty five conferences and organizations celebrated the fifth annual "Friends of the Poor Walk." On Saturday, September 28 they gathered at De Sales high school between 9 and 10 AM for coffee and pastries, music and Vincentian Friendship. To start them off, Bishop Campbell encouraged and congratulated the walkers. The walk generated a little over \$43,000 for the various conferences and the Diocesan Council ministries.

Click on the link below to access Diane-Keller Smith's article on the last page of a pdf version of the October 20, 2013 *Catholic Times*.

<http://www.vincentianvoice.org/events.html#Walk for the Poor>

Voices from Participants in the Seminar on Systemic Change.

Three members of the Voice of the Poor committee traveled to St. Louis, August 15-17, to the National Council's intensive three day seminar on systemic change. They were Warren Wright (Council VP and Voice of the Poor leader), Jody Stahr, St. Paul's Westerville and Lesha Farias, St. Francis de Sales, Newark. Below are personal statements of their

experience. These statements should guide us towards understanding our National President Sheila Gilbert's goals for systemic change and to discern whether or not, and how, we will participate in it.

Jody Stahr reported:

“It was a wonderful seminar. The first day was an overview of The Bridges out of Poverty viewpoint. I thought I had a fair understanding, but learned so very much about the causes of poverty, the hidden rules of our class structures, the variety of resources that people have or don't have, the myriad of ways people can be trapped in generational poverty, and so much more. The day culminated in a “poverty simulation” that allowed us to have just an inkling of how it feels to be in poverty. The second and third days were spent discussing how SVDP National proposes we might try to begin to add another level of our service to the poor that would fall more under the systemic change realm. They presented a pilot program that has been going on for 3 years in Indianapolis and gave an overview on how individual councils and conferences might begin to build this new level. They stressed that this is systemic change from the bottom up ‘Trying to end poverty through systemic change, one person, one neighborhood, one community at a time’. They didn't spend much time on the bigger top down systemic change needs, but did acknowledge that these measures were also very important. “

Lesha Farias reflected:

“The 3 day systemic change workshop: Transforming Lives: Ending Poverty Through Systemic Change was an important opportunity to receive training in the Bridges Out of Poverty constructs and how National St. Vincent de Paul plans to infuse this vision in the work of conferences and communities nationwide. It was an intense learning agenda but a sound basis for our three-person team to learn enough to become the systemic change planning committee and formators for our Diocese.

As the 2008 book, Seeds of Hope: Stories of Systemic Change, written by the Vincentian

Family's Commission for Promoting Systemic Change, states on p. 3:

‘Systemic change aims beyond providing food, clothing, and shelter to alleviate the immediate needs of the poor. It focuses on assisting the needy to change the overall structures within which they live and helps them develop strategies by which they can emerge from poverty.’

Now it is up to our team and our Diocese to decide how we are going to go forward, keeping National's 2012-2015 Systemic Change Implementation Plan in mind.

As Frederic Ozanam stated, ‘Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveler who has been attacked. It is justice's role to prevent the attack.’

How will we begin to work with the poor rather than for the poor, to address the attacks on them in our world today?”

Voice of the Poor

The Voice of the Poor committee is active with its advocacy work. Committee members met with legislators to explain how legislation about food stamps, immigration and Medicare expansion will improve the lives of those we serve. On February 2-5 some will travel to Washington D.C. for the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering sponsored by the UCCB (Bishops). There they will continue their advocacy work on Capitol Hill.

The committee is expanding its advocacy mission by leading those we serve to become advocates on their own behalf. This project involves both types of systemic change. By mentoring people to become leaders of political advocacy groups they are raised up from their personal system of poverty. In turn, these advocacy groups change the unjust systems. The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) awards grants for such programs. We are in the grant writing phase of a five year program to develop such groups. The Detroit Action Collaborative (DAC) is an advocacy group constituted and lead by those we call the poor. On November 8, some members of the Voice of the Poor will travel to Detroit to observe a meeting of DAC.

Moral Miracle

Volunteers guide customers through the **Clothing Distribution Center**. The volunteers hold large plastic bags into which the person being served places garments they select while “shopping.” With their hands free customers are able to make their selections more effectively and swiftly. A small problem with this procedure is that all plastic bags look the same.

One hot August morning a volunteer, Charles K. was escorting through a young woman, Crystal S. along with her four year old son. To free up her hands Crystal asked Charles if she could put her purse in the bag, He agreed. That was a mistake. The purse held her cell phone, credit and identity cards along with her small amount of cash. Somehow in the checking out process, when the bags are set on the floor, someone else mistakenly picked up Crystal’s bag. Crystal discovered the mistake as she looked into her bag to tie it up before leaving. Hysteria broke out as she realized that she had lost all the papers she needed to negotiate in her cycle of poverty along with her cell phone.

When the face of Christ we see is that of a woman “freaking out,” He is demanding immediate corrective action. To calm her, Charles persuaded her to drive with him to the nearest gasoline station so he could fill up her car to get her home and to a job interview. Of more importance was the promise, which she could see being kept, of calling her cell phone every fifteen minutes. The hope was that the cell phone would ring in the bag and the person who picked up the wrong bag would answer. After about an hour and a half, Charles made contact with the man, Fred R., who picked up the wrong bag. Fred was at Faith Mission Men’s Homeless Shelter when he answered the phone. Fred is a man of good character. He walked back to the Clothing Center which is about three quarters of a mile from Faith Mission to return the bag and purse. Within three hours, Crystal had her purse, cell phone and clothes. She was very grateful.

Back in the forties there was a radio program about a private detective who could turn invisible: “The Shadow.” Lamont Cranston –The Shadow – would intone “Who knows what evil

lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows” Vincentians can parody the Shadow by asking “Who know what goodness lies in the hearts of men? Vincentians do because we look for Christ in their faces.”

On Youth Conferences

Welcome to Michele Himes the moderator of our most recent Youth Conference: St. Mary’s Delaware.

The dynamic Youth Conferences in the Columbus Diocese, which now number 10, have caught the attention of The National Council. We read in its October 7, 2013 *Frederic’s E-Gazette*,

“Let’s hear applause for **The District Council of Columbus, Ohio, and Bill Sparks, District Council President**, for outstanding dedication in bringing young people into the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The council has the most groups from one area. Bill engages the moderators to meet with each other so they can share ideas and successes. Each year, Bill does a commissioning with all the groups, and has networked very effectively with the administration at 10 schools in the area, and found teachers and Vincentians who can assist the moderators. “

New Presidents

Deborah Cook-Gorsuch replaces Lesha Farias as president St. Francis de Sales, Newark

Mike Krolkowski replacing John Keefer as president at Pius X Reynoldsburg

Dave Bondreau replacing Kathleen Walsh at St. Joan of Arc

Sue Wein replacing Randy Clore at St. Philip, Columbus

Remember in your prayers

John J. Keefner, Past President SVdP Conference Pius X, Reynoldsburg

Phil Chafin, A long time Vincentian from Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Grove City

DIOCESAN COUNCIL

Officers:

- Diocesan Council President: Bill Sparks
- Diocesan Council Vice President: Warren Wright
- Treasurer: Janet Jobko
- Secretary: Kym Haskins
- At Large: Jody Stahr, Darrell Bragg, Maureen Meck
- Spiritual Advisor: Fr. Charles Klinger

District Council Presidents:

- East: Tim Hickey
- East Rural: Richard Shannon
- N-NW: Charles Kielkopf
- N-Central: Maureen Preston
- N-NE: Bob Zabloudil
- E-SE: Lesha Farias
- South Rural: David Lanning
- Inner-City: Gina Langen
- S-SW: Joffre Moine

Website address:

<http://www.vincentianvoice.org>

Committee Chairs:

- Ozanam Orientation: Maureen Meck, Rose Ann Stevenson,
- Voice of the Poor: Warren Wright
- VOICE & Website: Charles Kielkopf
- 2013 Friends of the Poor Walk: Patti Aellig
- Publicity: Dianne Keller-Smith
- Music: Joann Wright
- Photographer: Angela Ray

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Send news items and articles for The VOICE to Charles Kielkopf kielkopf.1@osu.edu or to the Diocesan office.

Excerpts from Heather King's piece in **Magnificat** for Friday, September 27, 2013

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL (1581-1660) was born into a French peasant family, earned a degree in theology, was captured by Turkish pirates and sold as a slave, escaped with his master, whom he converted, and returned to France. A lesser man might have been embittered or fatally traumatized. Saint Vincent, by contrast, began to work tirelessly for the poor. He had a special charism for galley convicts, who at the time lived in subhuman conditions of pestilence and misery. He opened shelters, soup kitchens, and hospices, first in France, then around the world.

We live in a culture that prizes intelligence. Saint Vincent de Paul was clearly intelligent—to come from a peasant family and earn a college degree is no small feat, in any era—but true intelligence resides in the heart. Intelligence regards the suffering of the rest of the world and realizes, I'm complicit in it. Intelligence has a conscience and the hunger to know, How can I help? True intelligence embraces and encompasses the imperfect: the blind, the lame, the leper.

That's why, after Christ the next most intelligent people are the saints. Only the mind of the saint takes in the whole picture. Saint Vincent de Paul saw that one truly intelligent way to follow Christ is to recognize our own spiritual poverty and to serve that poverty in "the least of these." He recognized that one truly intelligent way to practice theology was to tend to galley convicts, untouchables, and incurables.

Heather King is a contemplative laywoman and convert who lives in Los Angeles, CA. She is the author of three memoirs and blogs.