



Winter 2010

Volume XVIII, Number 1

President's Post

Submitted by Michael Pazzaglini, Diocesan Council President

Blessings to you and your families in 2010! I pray that the new year brings you much joy and peace. This year promises to be an exciting one for our Vincentian ministry. In 2010, we will welcome a new bishop, we will add new conferences to our diocesan ministry, we will start new special works projects, and we will serve our communities with compassion and love. Furthermore, we will grow in our own holiness as we seek the face of Christ in the individuals we serve, in our fellow Vincentians, and in our families and our friends. I encourage you all to look forward to the future with faith and hope.



I extend a special invitation to celebration in the coming months. As many of you may know, this year marks the 350th anniversary of the deaths of our beloved St. Vincent and St. Louise. In honor of their lives and their legacies, the Vincentian Family around the world joins together in celebration. There is a series of online reflections that your conference can use to meditate upon the mission of love carried out by Vincent and Louis, and I urge you all to take advantage of the reflections. In addition, the Diocesan Council intends to use its annual Friends of the Poor Walk and Feast Day Celebration to highlight the anniversary and bring Vincentians from around the diocese together in fellowship. Together, we will rejoice in our opportunity to carry on the mission of charity, love, and justice started by St. Vincent and St. Louise.

In order to give the 350th anniversary the attention and celebration it deserves, the Diocesan Council calls all event planners and partygoers to action. We ask that anyone who is interested in helping us to brainstorm ideas and to plan either the Friends of the Poor Walk or the Feast Day Celebration to please be in touch with me. I will be grateful for your gift of your time and your talent. With your help, we can honor St. Vincent and St. Louise, and we can, all together, delight in our Vincentian vocation and offer thanksgiving for the many blessings of our ministry.

On a final note, I invite each of you to join us for our upcoming Vincentian spirituality retreat. The retreat offers an excellent opportunity to spend time reflecting on the amazing ministry St. Vincent entrusted to us.



Holy Week through the Lens of Our Vincentian Spirituality

2010 Spirituality Retreat by Fr. Leon Strieder, SLD
March 20, 2010 at the Diocese of Austin's Pastoral Center
For more information, call 251.6995



This is the Day the Lord Has Made...

Submitted by Gwen Till, St. Mary – Lockhart, Southern District Spiritual Advisor

Do you ever worry that you won't have enough time in your day to do all the things on your to do list? We have just finished one of the busiest seasons in the whole year – the Christmas Season. Isn't it strange that I chose to describe it that way when I should have used words like blessed, beautiful, holy – but that is what worrying about time does to us – it causes us to miss things in life that should matter the most.

Time always seems to be in short supply. Scripture tells us in Ecclesiastes that for everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. Perhaps we need to read this verse more often. It is telling us that whatever is before us this day, we will have time enough to do it easily and probably efficiently. We just need to let go of our worry surrounding our work, get rid of some of our bad habits of putting things off until the last minute, plan ahead, and focus more on the beauty, the importance, the significance of what it is we have to do and we will probably get it done with time to spare. Because then we won't look on it as a chore or a hassle, but as something special God has given us to take care of.

I have been trying to begin a new habit – each morning I say to myself, this is another precious day – God has given it to me – now what will I do with it? And then at night, before I go to bed, I thank God for the day and try to think about what precious things I did in this day. And what does precious mean – it means cherished, favorite, valuable, irreplaceable, treasured. Did I do anything today that one of these words could describe?

My answer will be yes if I remembered to share this time with others, maybe something as simple as just listening, or an offer to help. This should be easy for us, we are SVDP members – there is always someone there who needs us. And I can say yes again, if I have remembered to share my time with the God who gave it, maybe a moment of meditation or a spontaneous prayer during a particular busy chore. This positive way of thinking will show us that in every situation, we can have all the time we need to live our day well. Then Christmas, Easter, summer, winter, vacation, whatever glorious time is ahead of us, it will take on the right attitude and the right adjective.

From the book of Hosea (10:12) we hear, “Sow for yourself righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord.”

Regional Vehicle Donation Program expands SXSE

Submitted by Ronda Motl, Vehicle Donation Program Coordinator



We are delighted to report our latest Vehicle Donation Program (VDP) expansion into Southeast Texas in the SVDP Diocesan Council of Beaumont; operating in nine (9) counties and serving approximately 80,000 Catholics. Our prayerful hope is their VDP will raise money for people still suffering from recent natural disasters within the Diocese of Beaumont. Please join me in welcoming our Beaumont Vincentian brothers and sisters to our Regional VDP and praying for a fruitful partnership.

Around the Council – News From the Conferences

Be Careful What You Wish For

Submitted by Joleen Boyer, St. William, Conference President

Shortly after moving into our new facility on St. William's campus, our conference faced a dilemma. We had just left our old facility, jokingly referred to as a cracker box, which was a very small portable building of approximately 250 sq. feet, consisting of a small office, a reception room, and a food pantry large enough for only one person at a time. In contrast, our new home had a food pantry almost the size of our old building. When we moved, we could barely fill the shelves, and it looked completely empty. How in the world would we ever be able to fill all those wonderful (empty) shelves?

To begin, we decided to host an open house, invite the parish, and include a food drive so everyone could see where their donations would go. It was a great success, and for the first time, we almost filled the shelves. At just about that time, the economy in Round Rock took a dive, and we experienced a tremendous increase in first-time clients. School was out for the summer, and all of a sudden, we were out of food again. Fortunately, we had just been approved to purchase food items from the Capital Area Food Bank. Even with their help, it was a struggle to keep food on the shelves.

We spent the next several months making our needs known to anyone who would listen; parishioners, parish ministries and religious education students – everyone! October came and we knew the Hairy Man Festival, a neighborhood community project, was just around the corner and would bring help. Admission to the day's events was \$2 or 2 cans of food, which we shared with the Round Rock Serving Center. It was a rainy day, but the crowds came and the day was a huge success. Our pantry was full again.

Again, we knew we would be ok for a while, but at the rate we were distributing food, it would not last long. Thus, we conducted a Thanksgiving food drive within the parish. As usual, it was a huge success, and we all breathed a sigh of relief. We were set through the end of the year, maybe through February. Just about that time, the phone started ringing: Fr. Dean wants to invite parishioners to bring food to Thanksgiving Day Mass, we purchased 8 large baskets and filled them to capacity; the KC's want to collect canned goods in lieu of admission to their Breakfast with Santa; our ministry/office staff/church wants to do a food drive for you, is that OK? "Sure!" I said, not having a clue where I was going to put all this food. I was definitely NOT about to tell anyone NO!

In no time at all, people started knocking at our door and dropping off carloads of food they had collected for us. It became so busy that we had to put food collection barrels on the front porch. We emptied them almost every day! One day, I was in the office and heard the sounds of cans dropping one by one into the barrels; when I looked out to see who it was, there was a class of 4-5 year olds from Mother's Day Out bringing food to us. I invited them in and let them put the food on the shelves in the pantry. Our shelves were filling up quickly! AND we were running out of space! HOW could that possibly happen?



It wasn't over yet! The choirs from McNeil High School held their Christmas choir concert in our beautiful church. As a way of giving back to their community, admission was two canned goods. We surrounded the Christmas tree in the Narthex with our baskets, and parents, students, and friends generously filled them to overflowing capacity. The choirs performed beautiful music, and they collected over 700 lbs of food!

Because of our relationship with Capital Area Food Bank we are required to weigh all food donations. During the months of November and December we collected very close to 11,000 lbs of can goods. Through some creative genius of our members, which we had become very good at while at the old facility, we managed to find space to store our new treasures. The moral of this story: Be careful what you wish for!

Serving Better, Serving Together

Submitted by Elizabeth Zarsky, St. John/St. Paul – Marble Falls and Horseshoe Bay

The St. John/St. Paul Conference of St. Vincent de Paul hosted an informational meeting on December 7, 2009 for the purpose of learning about the various social service programs that are offered in Burnet and Williamson Counties through the Williamson-Burnet County Opportunities (WBCO). Mr. Andrew Shell, the organization's executive director, gave an extensive presentation on this private, community-based nonprofit organization.

WBC Opportunities serves thousands of people annually in both counties, working cooperatively with other agencies. WBC Opportunities advocates for those who might not otherwise have a voice in the community in which they live. This assistance is provided in the form of the following programs: Head Start for children prenatal through five; Senior Activity Centers for adults 60 years and older at the various centers; Meals-on-Wheels delivers meals to the homebound; Neighborhood Centers offer a variety of services and referral to other agencies. This presentation was very informative to the St. Vincent de Paul members, as well as to other community leaders, who are in a position to assist those members of our community who are in need of referral to these various programs.

Thanksgiving Baskets Exceed Expectations

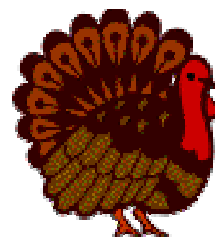
Submitted by Monica Figun, St. John/St. Paul – Marble Falls and Horseshoe Bay

“For I was hungry, and you gave me food.” (Matthew 25:35)

The annual Thanksgiving Basket project of our St. John/St. Paul conference in Marble Falls/Horseshoe Bay far exceeded our expectations. Through the amazing generosity of Vincentians and parishioners, we provided 37 complete Thanksgiving dinners to less fortunate members of our parish and community.

This year, we extended an invitation for parishioners to join us in our Thanksgiving project, and the response was unbelievable. Starting with pulpit talks and notices in the bulletins, we handed out bilingual pledge forms after all masses for two weekends. The pledges allowed donors to choose between making a complete basket, providing selected canned goods, or making a monetary donation. While SVdP members were expected to nominate their clients, the pledge card offered the opportunity for parishioners to nominate other families, including their own.

After collecting the pledges, SVdP members identified the families who would receive Thanksgiving baskets, and we then contacted all recipients to verify information and preferences. We contacted all donors to give them the information and delivery instructions, and in the end, our Vincentians only assembled two baskets that were not matched with a specific donor. The average cost of a basket was estimated at \$60-\$65, and in addition, thanks to the monetary donations from our parishioners, we were able to put a \$20 gift card in every basket for perishable goods. We are indeed grateful to everyone who contributed prayerfully and financially to make our project a success.



Vincentian Ministry in Copperas Cove

Submitted by Gerry Greene, Holy Family, Copperas Cove, Conference President

It's been an exciting few months of Vincentian ministry in Copperas Cove! In late November, our conference participated in a community program that the CHOP (Christian House of Prayer) runs that feeds approximately 300 people. For Christmas, because of our great big new freezer, we collected over 100 turkeys, and we made special packages for over 105 of our clients. Each package included a complete Christmas dinner. The Christmas project was so successful that we have plans to do something similar for Easter, collecting hams instead of turkeys. Our food pantry continues to feed nearly 1300 people a month, getting around 50 new people a month.

Sharing Christmas Cheer

Submitted by Ron Rice, St. Paul, Conference President

The St. Paul Conference Christmas Giving Project assisted 33 families and a total of 144 people in 2009. Due to a lack of space in the church building, our conference re-organized our project into a new format. After masses, parishioners received envelopes that allowed them to anonymously sponsor families. Next, parishioners purchased gift cards to Wal-mart or Target and donated the gift cards to SVDP. We also collected donations for frozen turkeys, nativity sets (purchased through the SVDP store in Phoenix, AZ), and HEB grocery store gift cards. Parishioners also made a "Movie Night" gift basket for the families, as well. The SVDP client families received gifts between \$125 & \$250 in value, depending on the size of their family. On December 12th, we delivered the items to the 33 families. The new format for the project worked well and we plan to do it again this year.



Vincentians from St. Paul organize and prepare to deliver Christmas goodies.

St. Austin's Christmas Baskets

Submitted by Mary Lou Gibson, St. Austin

Christmas 2009 was a bit merrier for the residents of one of our local apartment complexes in northwest Austin. All 110 families at the complex received Christmas baskets filled with food and gifts from St. Austin's parishioners. Our conference coordinated the project, led by Jennifer Korba and Huddie Murray. The 2009 event resulted in the largest food and gift collection since the project began more than 25 years ago. Parishioners, parish ministries, and St. Austin's school children and their families all showed tremendous support. For example, the school children donated \$1,500 for the 2009 Christmas baskets using money they raised from the school's "Penny Wars." This fundraiser encourages students to bring their pennies and put them in jars set up in the school hall. They compete by grades to collect the most pennies. This is the third year of the "Penny Wars," and the money raised has always gone to the Christmas Basket Project.

The project began when parishioners brought non-perishable food items to the Thanksgiving Day Mass, and our food collection continued through mid-December. At the parish's holiday fair in early December, the names of all the basket recipients hung on the Giving Tree. Parishioners selected names and purchased gifts. A special gift wrapping team wrapped many of the gifts and later matched gifts with the appropriate family. All the gifts and food items were sorted and packed into the Christmas baskets a couple of days before the baskets were delivered. Assembly night was a flurry of activity involving St. Austin's school children, teens, college students, families and friends who came together and filled boxes, checked names and addresses, and lined up the boxes by zip code for the delivery day.



St. Austin's Vincentians prepare to deliver holiday gifts and cheer.

The 2009 Christmas Basket Project served a record 189 families for a total of 483 people. The recipients included many families who were referred from counselors at 8 Austin public schools. The St. Vincent de Paul Society also decided to give baskets to all the residents of one of its often served apartment locations so that all of the families could have a good Christmas dinner.

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

Submitted by Margaret McKinney, St. Anthony

St. Anthony's St. Vincent de Paul conference in Kyle sponsored 60 families for its 2009 Christmas party. The conference placed angel ornaments with the clients' ages, sizes, and requests on our angel trees in church, and parishioners adopted the families for Christmas. Parishioners also received grocery bags and lists of the community's grocery needs. Once parishioners brought food and gifts to the church, SVDP volunteers sorted the donations. Several organizations and individuals sponsored an entire family. St. Anthony's Knights of Columbus members prepared a meal for the party, and a multitude of parishioners and SVDP volunteers served food, drinks and dessert to the families. Much to the children's delight, Santa Claus paid a visit to celebration. The 7th grade confirmation class presented the nativity play, and they did a beautiful job telling the story of Christ's birth. The children's choir sang Christmas songs and invited all of the children at the party to join them.

Our SVDP Society has been very blessed this year with many parish groups collecting food for our pantry. Two youth groups did a food drive, and a Cub Scout group also collected food for us and brought gifts. The St. Anthony's Knights of Columbus Council #7975 also voted to collect food items for us on a regular basis. One of the members made two large wooden boxes for the church Narthex, and parishioners can drop off food items throughout the year. This generosity has been a wonderful help to us and allows us to take bags of food to every client we visit. The Society also obtains damaged household items (e.g. detergent) and seasonal items from the new Target in Kyle. The Lord has blessed us tremendously with the support from our parishioners and the Community.



St. Anthony's middle school students present a nativity play for party guests.

Angel Food Ministries at St. Thomas More

Submitted by Bob Pettit, St. Thomas More, Conference President

Our SVDP conference at St. Thomas More now sponsors a national Angel Food Ministries (AFM) project. In the last six months, the project has provided food to over 350 people. The December food order was 82 boxes. Angel Food Ministries is a hand up, not a hand out. Its purpose is that of helping the working poor to stretch their food budgets. Once a month, program participants are able to get about \$60 of food for a \$30 payment. Because of the AFM project, our conference has welcomed a couple new Vincentians and over a dozen associate members. To learn more about Angel Food Ministries, visit their site online at www.AngelFoodMinistries.com.



Fr. Mike Sis reviews the AMF food assembly line.

The Best Christmas Ever

Submitted by Tom Hughes, Santa Cruz, Conference President

The best Christmas ever! People always ask, "How was your Christmas?" For 2009, I answer, "the best Christmas ever!" The holiday's goodness began with the planning for our SVDP Santa Cruz Angel Tree Project. As we prepared to meet the needs of over 200 children, I quickly became wrapped up in our project. The Angel Tree went up in the church narthex with all the tags representing real angels, children of families in need. Parishioners adopted all tags on the first weekend, and soon, the gifts started arriving in the parish office. We began planning our Angel Tree dinner, and all the Vincentians joined in to get everything ready.



At this point, I must digress for a moment. Before Christmas, our family made a decision to forego the usual Christmas gift swapping in exchange for selecting a large family from the Angel Tree Project. Our daughter, her husband, and their daughter, our only grandchild, loved the idea. Our son and his wife, who live in Dallas, heard the story of the family in need and made an extremely generous donation to purchase gifts. My daughter and I shopped for the gifts together. We had a grand time shopping for the gifts for the six children in need, adopted and foster care children, being held together by a brave, but almost overwhelmed, mother and her spouse. A Vincentian home visit brought this family into our project when Jesus tugged at their hearts, "Take care of my children...." My daughter and I laughed and cried, picking out gifts, adding blankets for each child to keep them warm this winter. Each child had a bag of gifts wrapped and decorated with love by my wife.

Now, back to the Angel Tree Dinner. On the evening of the event, God blessed us with volunteers of all ages. We prepared for the families to arrive, and it was slow and nervous at first. We anxiously wondered if anyone would show up. Thankfully, families started to arrive, volunteers prepared food, children served punch, Christmas music played, and packaged gifts lay waiting. As usual, I was a bundle of nerves. Then it happened. From the back door, I saw my daughter, my angel on earth, next to her was my grandchild, a blessing from God, and behind them my son-in-law. My heart jumped as my daughter said, "Dad, we thought you could use some help!" An unexpected gift from God. My anxiety ceased, and I just took delight in watching everyone pitch in and serve our Angel Tree families. Our guests ate, they chatted, they laughed, the children made gifts for the Baby Jesus, they sang Happy Birthday to Jesus, and shared a birthday cake. The children received their gifts with great excitement and joyous smiles, and the families expressed their gratitude. After cleaning up, our members shared a glass of wine and toasted our client families and each other, our SVDP family.



During the week before Christmas, my wife told me we should take the makings of a Christmas dinner to our Angel Tree family. I was reluctant to intrude on the family without being asked, but I knew my wife had better instincts than I, and our call to the family was met with gratitude. My wife, my granddaughter, and I went to our SVDP Food Pantry and packed up a Christmas dinner. I explained to my granddaughter what we were doing, and I told her she did not have to go inside, unless she wanted to. When we arrived, there was a big dog on the porch, so I made the initial walk on my own. As I approached the porch, the dog moved over, the door opened, and the smiling mother appeared with one of her foster sons. As I turned, I saw my granddaughter and my wife behind me carrying bags of food. We entered the home, and as we visited, the mother told me that 10 minutes before I called she told her husband of her concern that they had no food for a Christmas dinner. With tears in her eyes, she said, "your call was God's answer to our prayer."

Christmas morning, true to our Angel Tree pledge, we had no gifts to exchange. After a beautiful Christmas Mass, we drove to our daughter's house for a meal and gifts for our grandchild. As we sat and talked, my daughter, who is not a practicing Catholic for reasons too long and complicated for this story, gave me my best Christmas gift ever. She casually told me the story of how her family searched for an early Christmas Eve Mass, found one at St. Catherine. They walked a quarter mile from their parking spot to get to the Church, stood in the narthex of the crowded Church, and all three of them really enjoyed the experience. I listened in silence as my heart, again, jumped for joy, as my silent, unspoken prayer was answered. The best Christmas ever!



Please Join Us in Prayer...

- In thanksgiving for the solidarity and fellowship enjoyed by Vincentians from all parts of our South Central Region during our recent meeting in Houston.
- For all Haitians, that they may find peace and security on the other side of tragedy. We pray especially our Vincentians in Haiti, in thanksgiving for their safety and for their willingness to continue to serve despite the difficulties and devastation.
- For the willingness to choose, on a daily basis, to carry on the mission of love and charity started by St. Vincent and St. Louise over 350 years ago.



Rest in Peace...

Joe Perez, Queen of Angels
Sue Grabarkewitz, St. Mary, Lockhart
Arnold Salinas, husband of Fidelia Salinas, Holy Cross, Bertram
Frances Lopez, mother of Ann Lopez, St. Anthony, Kyle



A True Vincentian Example

Submitted by Jan Dearing, Queen of Angels, Conference President

Jose "Joe" Perez died December 31, 2009. For six years, through three SVDP administrations, he was our conference's spiritual advisor at Queen of Angels. Joe was our only bilingual member. Two weeks before he died he was translating for us over the phone, so that we could completely understand our clients' needs. He knew just what to say. He was kind and gentle. His faith was a beautiful example of the grace God gives to those who love Him. Joe is sorely missed, but he promised to pray for us and we believe he will serve us well at the feet of Christ.



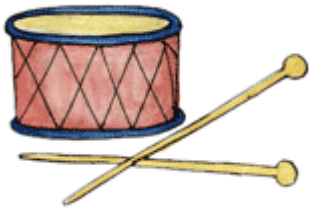
Music Is In the Air

Submitted by Paul Kleypas, Stores Director

With March fast approaching, the beat on South Congress is getting stronger and stronger for the annual SXSW Music Festival. Over the past 7 years, the store has enjoyed the increased amount of traffic that the event generates. During the busy SXSW weekend, we put our merchandising plan in overdrive and fill our racks with unique clothing, vinyl records, Texas "treasures", and funky accessories. We see regular customers come back year after year from places like England, Japan, Germany, and Australia, just to name a few.

This year, however, the store's customers will find an extra special treat. The store has partnered with Freebirds World Burrito and a music promotions company to present the first annual **FREEBIRDS WORLD WORKS STAGE BENEFITING THE ST. VINCENT DE PAUL STORE**. Together, we will present 4 days of live music starting Wednesday, March 17 and going through Saturday, March 21. In the SoCo store's parking lot, we will host 3 live bands from 5pm to 8pm each evening. To add to the fun, Freebirds will be providing burritos and drinks to partygoers, and the store will invite a few of its 1st Thursday vendors to sell their art as well. We will extend store hours throughout the week, and we will be open on Sunday. I have wanted to extend our participation in this festival for quite some time, but both knowledge and time limits prevented it. This could be the start of a great collaboration with Freebirds and their Community Awareness Program to bring exposure to the Store.





The stage shows are free to the public, but all advertising and promotions will suggest a \$5 donation at the door. Proceeds will help offset cost of the event, with excess funds going to the store. In addition, the exposure for extended shopping opportunities should prove to be very profitable. Please invite your family and friends to join us during SXSW. We will provide talented musicians, an excellent shopping environment, and the satisfaction of knowing that by visiting the SoCo store during SXSW you are able to “Help Us Help Others.” There will be plenty of opportunities to volunteer during the extended hours, so please feel free to call and let me know when you might want to sign up to help out.

Have a great Spring 2010, and I look forward to seeing you soon.
 God Bless and, as always, thanks for your continued support of the SVdP Stores.

ROUND ROCK SVDP STORE OFFERS NEW BARGAINS

In January, the Round Rock Store added new bargain items to its store inventory. These items, purchased through a local vendor, offer customers the opportunity to get basic household items at the store while shopping for great clothes and furniture. Store staff and volunteers stocked laundry, bath, and kitchen items in an organized area making selection quick and easy. Please spread the word to your family, and business associates that this new department is available in the area. All these items sell for \$1.50 each.

Save the Dates!

Date	Event	Location
February 28 th	Ozanam Orientation	St. Catherine of Siena, Austin
March 20 th	2010 Spirituality Retreat	Diocese of Austin's Pastoral Center
May 1 st	General Assembly	St. William, Round Rock

Smithville Conference to Host Art Auction

Mark your calendars now for the evening of Saturday, May 1st and plan to attend an art exhibition and auction benefiting the Smithville St. Vincent de Paul conference. It will be held in the St. Paul's Parish Hall at 200 Mills Street in Smithville. The social and cultural evening begins at 6 pm with a variety of hors d'oeuvres, wine, and other beverages and the opportunity for guests to view and discuss the 200 or more works of art with the experienced and knowledgeable auctioneer. The art will include a wide variety of custom-framed original watercolors, oil paintings, pastels and a diverse selection of signed and numbered graphics. There will be lithographs, serigraphs and etchings by many internationally famous artists as well as works by many artists with great potential for the future. The auction commences at 7 pm, and a work of art door prize will be awarded at the conclusion of the evening. The exhibit and auction is arranged and conducted by Perry Berns Gallery of Dallas which, since 1973, has successfully organized art auctions throughout this part of the country. We invite all Vincentians to this exciting fundraising event. See you then!

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