



Fall 2008

Volume XVI, Number 3

A Letter From Our President

Dear Vincentians,

The upcoming year promises to be full of possibilities for the Society in Central Texas. The Diocesan Council aspires to many good things in 2009 – the continued growth of our Vehicle Donation Program, the creation of SSVDP conferences in more parishes, the development of stronger collaborative partnerships with local organizations, and the strengthening of our leadership development opportunities for all Society members in Central Texas.



As you are painfully aware, a difficult economic year is coming to an end. We've all seen a dramatic increase in need in our communities. We should expect this trend to continue into 2009. In order to respond to this challenge, we need to make sure all of us are as prepared as we can be as leaders within the community and within the Society. Sometimes, the idea of Vincentian leadership appears to be overwhelming, yet we depend on Vincentians who step up to answer the vocational call to a leadership role in the Society. As a Vincentian community, we must recognize that without effective leaders, our ministry would flounder and those we serve would suffer the consequences. Through prayer and Providence, we, as Vincentian leaders, guide and encourage the Society as we build our local network of charity and justice.

To help foster an increase in Vincentian leadership, the Diocesan Council is establishing a growing network of resources and support for conference leaders. For example, the Diocesan Council recently hosted its first Leadership Forum for local Vincentian leaders. Current and potential conference leaders gathered to share their stories and to learn from the other leaders present. In speaking with Vincentians who attended the forum, I understand that the event was very useful, and a good start. As a result, we plan to host our second Leadership Forum on Saturday, March 7, 2009. Mark your calendars now!

To our current Vincentian leaders, I share my gratitude. Thank you for your dedicated service to our Society. To anyone who is considering the call to Vincentian leadership, please continue to discern about your role as a future leader. We need you. As a Diocesan Council, we are here to support all Vincentian leaders, new and experienced, and I remain committed to assisting conference leaders in any way possible.

I leave you with the words of St. Louise de Marillac as she challenges us all to listen closely to God's call to us as His servants. St. Louise shares, "*I must have great trust in God and believe that His grace will be sufficient to enable me to fulfill His holy will, however difficult it may appear to be, provided the Holy Spirit is truly calling me.*" I invite you all, as potential Vincentian leaders, to trust that, when the time comes, God's grace will enable you to step forward into conference, district, or diocesan council leadership

A very merry Christmas and happy new year to you all!

Spirituality for the Season

Submitted by Deacon Paul Lavalley, Diocesan Council Spiritual Advisor, St. John – Marble Falls

Getting ready for the Christmas holidays can be both exciting and challenging. The secular world calls us to “get ready” for Christmas. Our Catholic faith calls us to prepare for the celebration of the Incarnation, Jesus becoming human. In between the cleaning, the shopping, and the card writing, deep in the recesses of our hearts, we ponder how we might be able to help those who won't be able to clean, or shop, or address cards. Our minds might be pulled toward those who are alone and trapped in their own homes; those who will spend the winter nights just trying to keep warm, those parents whose hearts ache because they have no gifts for their children, and those who worry where their next meal will come from.

St. Vincent de Paul, someone who understood what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus, believed strongly that each of us should be – today – at this moment - a living disciple of Jesus. Vincent worked to reduce the suffering of the poor, the marginalized, the sick, the aged, and the unemployed. He believed in living the Gospel message.

The Gospel requires us to welcome into our hearts those discarded by society, the economically and socially marginalized, those in need of our care. We must open our eyes and look for the unexpected encounters in our life. There we can find Jesus in our midst. We might just experience a connection with someone and an unconditional response of love and generosity. Jesus is here! When we find Jesus in the poor and marginalized, we should be ready for that encounter. How else can the Lord find that unconditional response of love and generosity - if not through our own actions?

The Power of Prayer

Submitted by Marianna Sedillo, St. Mary, Our Lady of the Lake

Several weeks ago, I did a home visit with a young widow who was in need of both rent and utilities assistance. She lost her job 2 months before and was threatened by an eviction notice. Our conference in Lago Vista agreed to pay \$200 of the woman's \$1400 rent bill, but when we called the landlord to negotiate on the woman's behalf, the landlady told us that they needed half of the entire amount immediately.

In an effort to collect the \$700, I sent out a request for twinning assistance within our district council. Several other conferences agreed to assist, but several days later, however, I was able to return to my district and tell them that, despite their willing generosity, no additional funds would be necessary.

After requesting twinning assistance, I called the landlady to tell her that I hoped to have the \$700 to her by the end of the week. During the conversation, I also asked the landlady if it was possible to lower my client's monthly rent. As I made my request, the landlady asked me why I was so concerned about the woman. I told her that the client had solicited our assistance, and in response, she said, "but she is not even Catholic!" I explained to her that SVdP is a Catholic lay organization that helps everyone in need, regardless of religion. She thanked me and said she it was fine to wait until the end of the week to pay the rent.

Thirty minutes later, the landlady unexpected called me back to say that she and her husband had discussed their tenant's situation and had decided that they would forgive the debt and lower the tenant's rent. She thanked our Society for our service to what must be a very gratifying mission. I, truly, believe my prayers were answered.

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Around the Council – News From the Conferences

St. Vincent de Paul Feast Day Celebration

Submitted by Tom Hughes, Santa Cruz

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, along with the Ladies of Charity and Daughters of Charity, celebrated St. Vincent de Paul's feast day at Santa Cruz Catholic Church in Buda on Saturday, October 11th. Over 200 members of the Vincentian family from around the diocese attended the celebration.



A collection of SVDP conferences' banners.

We were honored to have Bishop Aymond celebrate the Mass with us. Fr. Deane, Fr. Kirby, and Deacon Ray, all of Santa Cruz Catholic Church, participated in the liturgy. In his homily, Bishop Aymond reminded us all, Vincentians and parishioners alike, of our invitation to share at the table set for us by Christ and of our obligation to share that invitation with others.

Following the Mass, the Vincentian family gathered for a banquet. The parish activity center was beautifully decorated for a festive fall atmosphere, and food and fellowship were shared by all. Mike Pazzaglini, our Diocesan Council President, updated Vincentians about the Society's organizational planning. As the Society revisits its strategic plan, we affirm our primary Vincentian purpose of spiritual growth. The Society's spiritual growth is supported by the three guiding principles: serving those in need, leadership empowerment, and organizational efficiency. After dinner, Mike also recognized past and present Vincentian leaders, new members of the Society, and Vincentians celebrating service anniversaries.

We offer a special thanks to the women and men of our SVDP conference at Santa Cruz for their gifts of time and talent setting up and decorating the PAC. May God bless you, as always our prayers are with you.



Vincentians from Sacred Heart – Austin enjoy the Feast Day banquet.

Hurricane Ike Relief in Bryan-College Station

Submitted by Pat Schoenemann, Bryan-College Station

George Caudle and Patricia Schoenemann, two Vincentians from Bryan-College Station, teamed up to take beds to four disabled senior citizens who recently returned to Galveston Housing Authority apartments after living in a hotel in College Station for a month. The seniors served by the Society openly shared their gratitude and relief.

Of the four seniors, only one was able to remain in her pre-Hurricane Ike apartment building, although no longer on the ground floor. Because her previous apartment flooded, she lost all of her furniture. The woman, whose livelihood was nursing, found that her valuable medical books miraculously escaped water damage. Aside from the books, however, she had only one tiny table for furniture, was using ice chests for chairs, and slept on a very uncomfortable cot. When we showed up with her full size bed, complete with frame and bed linens, she was ecstatic.

Similarly, the other three seniors who moved back to Galveston were starting over without furniture. One 80-yr old lady was sleeping on two blow-up twin beds stacked one atop the other, and it's a miracle that she

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didn't topple over in the middle of the night. Her case worker reported that she cried tears of joy upon hearing that she would have a real bed to sleep in that night.

Another woman was sleeping on a sofa with no cushions, only a sleeping bag on top of it, and the sofa was the only piece of furniture in her apartment. The third lady, suffering left side paralysis after a stroke, was trying to sleep on a twin bed, but she remained fearful of falling out of such a small bed. Each of the women lavished hugs and thanks upon us for bringing and setting up their new beds. We are grateful that these friends from Galveston, whom we served by doing laundry and providing a weekly hot meal during their 4-week stay in College Station, were able to return to their hometown in (empty, but clean) apartments with running water and electricity – once again surrounded by their friends.

Galveston itself has a long way to go to recover from the devastating effects of the storm. Ground level dwellings and businesses were flooded nearly all across the island. An above-ground landfill in the center of the island has mounds and mounds of storm debris being brought in, and the sidewalks on every street contain piles of ruined furniture, dead vegetation, and garbage. Cars ruined by the floods litter the parking lots. Apartment doors with red spray paint markings remind everyone of the recent door-to-door searches for people who failed to evacuate. The oleanders for which the island is famous are dying from saltwater contamination of the soil, as is all of the vegetation. Tent communities occupy parking lots next to tent restaurants. Boats tossed out of the bays litter the roadside along I-45. Blue tarp roofs are abundant among the residential neighborhoods. Despair and hope stand side-by-side as businesses advertise that they are hiring, cars obey the invisible four-way stop rule at intersections where traffic lights are not working, and people share what they have to help their neighbors. It was an inspiring but sobering journey--and an adventure in discovering human resilience and faith in God despite the overwhelming uncertainty of the future.

Ground Breaking News from St. William Conference!

Submitted by Joleen Boyer, St. William

Our St. William Conference broke ground for their new building on Sunday, November 2nd. The building will be a replica of the Carlin family home where Masses were celebrated from 1916 until 1940. We are bringing some history with us to our new campus to help remember the sacrifices of all those gone before us.

The tremendous growth of St. William Parish has resulted in the building of a new church, which opened in 2006. The second phase of the building program resulted in a Religious Education building; a Parish Center which includes an administration office and parish hall; Sacred Heart Chapel and the St. Vincent de Paul office and food pantry. Expected completion of these buildings is March of 2009.



St. William's Vincentians gather to celebrate the beginning of their new SVDP building.

For years, our Society of St. Vincent de Paul members have been working from what amounts to a closet with a couple of windows. Our new building will have 1,600 sq. ft, with private interview rooms and plenty of space for our food pantry. The new building will allow us to expand our services by conducting classes to assist our clients. Our goal is to focus on financial fitness and employability skills.

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Vincentian P.I.G.S

Submitted by Elizabeth Lainez, St. Christopher Conference

Several years ago, our SVDP conference at St. Vincent de Paul parish has created a successful partnership with the children in our parish RE classes, called the P.I.G.S program. Our RE director came up with the idea for the program - People In God's Service (hence the PIGS acronym!), and as part of the PIGS program, the middle school kids of our parish collect money quarterly (during the black bag collection) from the **RE youth** of our parish. We send the money to a parish in Zacatecas, Mexico to be used for their RE program only.

With the money we have been sending the RE program, they have started working on their buildings, and they will purchase desks and other items as soon as the structure is complete. We collect about \$70 monthly, so we send about \$210 quarterly - which buys a lot in Mexico. We receive quarterly updates from them with pictures, showing the catechist staff, priest, and children. Until recently, they were meeting outside, and it really excites the youth of our parish to see the progress with so little money. Not only does the P.I.G.S. program improve opportunities for the children and youth at Santa Maria de Guadalupe, but it also offers the youth of our parish in Austin an introduction to our Vincentian ministry of charity and justice.



Hospitality and Sharing in San Marcos

Submitted by Ben Ulcak, St. John the Evangelist, San Marcos

St. Vincent de Paul at St. John the Evangelist in San Marcos held an open house on September 27th and 28th in celebration of the St. Vincent de Paul Feast Day. Held in the Social Ministry Building, the home of the conference's office, meeting room and food pantry, the open house gathered approximately 120 attendees throughout the weekend. During the event, we served refreshments and offered information about the role of SVDP in the San Marcos community.



Sharing the Good News

Submitted by Ronda Motl, Vehicle Donation Program Coordinator

The Vehicle Donation Program (VDP) continues to be blessed by the Holy Spirit through the generosity of our donors. We recently achieved and then surpassed our 3000th vehicle donation!! This is good news!



We recently noticed an interesting phenomenon occurring in our VDP partner Council of Dallas. A group of taxi cab drivers has been sharing the information and opportunity of our VDP amongst themselves. Each of the cabbies has subsequently donated at least one vehicle to the VDP (some have donated two), and each promised to pass the word along to their future passengers. Isn't this a great example of how good news travels fast?!

Remember and make a note: 2008 is quickly coming to an end, and now is the time to donate that extra or un-needed vehicle in order to take advantage of a 2008 tax credit. Please know that every donated vehicle to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul makes a difference! Your donated vehicle directly impacts the level of assistance we are able to provide to those in need within our community. You can easily be an important part of the good news. One call takes care of it all – **512.912.7575** or **888.317.7837**.

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Thrift Store Shoptalk

Please celebrate with us as we rejoice in the blessings the thrift stores bring to our Vincentian ministry.

An Abundance of Blessings

Submitted by Mary Geil, Round Rock SVDP Thrift Store Manager

“Our mission on earth is to help the poor and the broken hearted,” says Bishop Gregory Aymond during the blessing of the new St. Vincent de Paul Store located at 1601 S. IH-35 in Round Rock, Texas on October 19, 2008. “We are called by the Holy Spirit to be obedient to the Gospel by clothing the naked and feeding the hungry.” Bishop Aymond blessed the store and merchandise with holy water and offered prayers that new SVDP Thrift Store provides an avenue to fill the needs of the people and to share Christ’s message of love.

Nicky Mercado, the store board president, opened the blessing event and expressed heartfelt gratitude to many of the individuals who supported the opening of the new store. Her list of thanksgiving included Stores Director Paul Kleypas and his wife Josie, the board members from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Ladies of Charity, volunteers, employees and store management, all of whom helped make the dream of a second thrift store become a reality. Through the generous donations of parishioners and neighbors, the store supports the mission of service to the poor and works closely with the Society and the Ladies of Charity through a voucher program enabling those in need to receive clothing and household goods at no charge.

The store is open Monday through Saturday from 9:30 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. and accepts gently used clothing, furniture (that needs no repair or cleaning), small working appliances, households, linens, books, toys, and collectables. **Volunteers are especially needed** on a routine basis to help with sorting, repairs, maintenance, odd jobs, loading and unloading donations and purchases, housekeeping and staging of items. For more information, please contact Store Manager, Mary Geil at 238-6737.

Joy to the World

Submitted by Paul Kleypas, SVDP Stores Director

It seems like the days pass by so quickly that we barely have time to catch our breath. We start the hustle and bustle of the holiday season so early that we almost overlook Halloween and Thanksgiving. When you see candy canes right next to jack-o-lantern jaw breakers, you prepare yourself for a fast ten weeks of blinding chaos.

At the St. Vincent de Paul Stores, we try to manage the holiday chaos a little differently. We don’t mix our holiday treasures to the extreme that our Big Box retail competitors do, and with the exception of a few teasers, we got through Halloween without seeing any holly and mistletoe. The SoCo store just wrapped up a very successful costume season, but we admit that before we bagged the last pirate and gypsy costumes, we started putting out jolly, old St. Nick and his vast assortment of holiday home decorations.

If you have not had the opportunity to stop into either of the stores, please do so. Not only will you be surprised at the amount of wonderful home décor we have for the season, but you will be amazed at the great gift opportunities at the stores. All the staff and volunteers have been working hard to make your shopping this Christmas a little more enjoyable and affordable. I know for a fact that we have some terrific prices on outerwear, games, and books. Please share with your friends and co-workers one of the best kept secrets in Austin and Round Rock.....the St. Vincent de Paul Stores. Not only do we offer great bargains, but their shopping at our stores does a lot of good for the poor in our community. This time of year is especially

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hard for those who are less fortunate. The need in Central Texas is great, and our SVDP stores strive to bring hope to the lives of those we serve.

In other news, both SVDP stores spent time in October gathering, sorting, and packaging clothing for individuals affected by Hurricane Ike. After working exhaustive hours immediately after the storm, the Society in Galveston – Houston made the plea for clothing. They began accepting individuals back to the Galveston area, and FEMA was referring all clothing clients to the Society. The Society in Galveston set up mobile tent “stores” and stocked them with donated clothing. The Austin stores sent about 4000 lbs. of men’s, women’s, and children’s clothing to Galveston, and the the Society’s Diocesan Council, because of a generous donation from our Queen of Angels conference, was able to send \$600 worth of underwear and socks. Houston’s executive director informed us that the clothes were greatly appreciated and helped them prepare for the surge of people coming to them for assistance.

I close by recognizing that we, in the Austin area, have been blessed. I thank those of you involved with the stores for your continued support, and I look forward to a very prosperous future. I wish you and your families a very blessed Christmas and a joyous new year.

Friends Walk with the Poor

Submitted by Kenneth Klanika, Diocesan Council Secretary, Sacred Heart, Austin

Community leaders, youth groups and local congregations joined members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVDP) to participate in the 1st Annual Friends of the Poor Walk. Several Austin area musicians, namely soloist David Thies and Lisa Laky and Pat Eberhardt of the LP’s, also contributed to the festivities, playing a variety of songs to entertain the 100+ walkers and volunteers who gathered for the event.

Designed to raise funds and that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul can use to serve the poor in our local community, the Friends of the Poor Walk raised more than \$17,000. The recently opened East Metro Park south of Manor, served as the venue for the inaugural event held on Saturday, September 27th.

Walkers had the opportunity to choose either a one-mile route or a five-kilometer route. Both of the walks started together and made their way within the 175-acre park boundary. Along the path, walkers also read signs with inspirational messages alternated with signs of factual information about the face of poverty.

The words of wisdom were quotes from Vincent de Paul like, “Say little. Do much.” Quotes from St. Louis de Marillac included, “Let us serve with hearts filled with the pure love of God which enables us always to love the roses amidst the thorns.”



Walkers enjoy the scenic paths of East Metro Park in Manor.



Kenneth Klanika, walk organizer, greets walkers before the event begins.

Vincentians are called to be a “Voice of the Poor” and statistics printed on signs along the paths reminded walkers that their work is not done. One of the signs noted that over 100,000 people in Travis County live below the federal poverty level. Texas ranks third in the nation for the highest rate of food insecurity and fifth for the highest rate of hunger. The signs served as a reminder that, as Vincentians, we are called to create change by raising our voices as advocates for the poor.

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Please Join Us in Prayer For...

We offer our petitions to the Lord for...

- The continued extension of the Society to all parishes in the Diocese of Austin
- Everyone whose lives were altered by Hurricane Ike, that the evacuees in Central Texas and the residents that remain along the Texas coast will receive the necessary support and assistance.
- Our Vincentian leadership throughout the Diocese of Austin, that our conference leaders will remain wise and passionate in their service to the Society.



Rest in Peace...

Celia Ortiz, St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store
Ernie Cruz, St. Helen, Georgetown

We offer our thanksgiving to the Lord for...

A successful first annual Friends of the Poor walk in September.
The healthy delivery of Heather Tarman's (our former executive director's) baby daughter, Lucy.
The growing collaboration between the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and other local service agencies.

Save the Dates!

Date(s)	Event	Location
January 31 st	Ozanam Orientation	Round Rock Thrift Store
February 9 th	Diocesan Council Meeting	Diocesan Council Office, Austin
March 7 th	Leadership Forum II	Round Rock Thrift Store
March 28 th	Vincentian Spring Retreat	St. William, Round Rock

**SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
CONTACT INFORMATION**

DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF AUSTIN

P.O. Box 9070, Austin, TX 78766

Phone: (512) 251-6995

Fax: (512) 252-1117

www.ssvdp.org

Council President, Mike Pazzaglini

VEHICLE DONATION PROGRAM

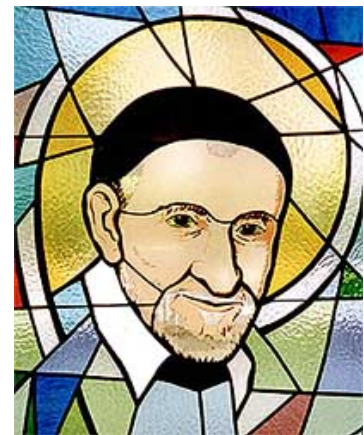
(512) 912-7575 or (888) 317-SVDP (7837)

THRIFT STORES

Austin: 1327 S. Congress Ave., (512) 442-5652

Round Rock: 1601 S. IH 35, #305, (512) 238-6737

Bryan: 300 N. Main St., (979) 823-4369



“If we are faithful in small things, God will trust us with those that are greater.”

-St. Vincent de Paul