

Putting words into action...

At St. Sebastian, there is an organization that is the “boots on the ground” of social justice, feeding the hungry and helping to shelter the needy within our own parish boundaries.

We’re all familiar with the St. Vincent de Paul society. The generous response to twice a year collections (see the special envelopes in your packet) shows that parishioners know that social justice is more than signing petitions, writing or calling legislators and begging for a slice of the public pie. Christ never asked governments to give to the poor and needy, He asked us, like the Good Samaritan, to care personally for those in need.

Our leader in this action is our St. Vincent de Paul ministry. President of this conference Mike Bedell, tells us that many are involved. First, there are the parishioners who give through the collection basket and the Poor Box. That includes hundreds of people. Secondly there are Bedell and the five others who as ministry members distribute the funds.

How is that “mission accomplished”? The ministry meets on Thursday evenings for an hour and makes a plan of action.

Given an average of three names of those in need, each ministry member sets up appointments to visit those people in their homes.

If there is a need for food, they provide the household with a gift card to Acme; if they come to an empty apartment, they help the people fill out forms to get furniture.

The aid given is considered “emergency funds” to help out with a current problem, and anyone who has contacted St. Vincent de Paul seeking help is limited to aid given three times a year per household.

The furniture distribution is accomplished through the Society’s relationship with CORE, a furniture bank in Cuyahoga Falls. During a home visit, St. Vincent Society members help the needy fill out forms to arrange this. Parishioners who wish to donate furniture to the bank can call CORE at 330-379-3188 and arrange for a pick up. CORE, in turn, identifies people within St. Sebastian parish boundaries who have contacted them for aid and pass on their names to our St. Vincent de Paul ministry.

The parish society has also obtained a grant from the Cleveland diocese to purchase used appliances for our needy neighbors.

So if you want to personally exercise Social Justice, join St. Vincent de Paul (call 330-289-4428 to reach Mike Bedell) and see what you can offer; help with the twice yearly collections at Mass; drop some money in the Poor Box whenever you can and donate your used furniture to CORE.

Christ told us the poor would always be with us, not so much to hint that we can't solve their problems but probably to suggest that there is always a need for us to fill.

Upcoming article: "Just what is a Cenacle?"