

Faith Works

Our Mother Of Sorrows Catholic Church
(OMOS) - 1800 S. Kolb Road
Tucson, AZ 85710

December 2006 – February 2007

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Welcome to the newsletter of the JustFaith group at OMOS. In this edition we have contributions from:

- Fr. JoJo Tabo has been a stranger in a strange land and understands the need for solidarity and welcoming of the stranger in the Christian Community.
- Jeanne Langer serves tirelessly in the St. Vincent de Paul Society here at OMOS. The St. Vincent de Paul Society meets the needs of the poor in our community by providing food for the hungry.
- Brian Flagg has served the needs of the poor for the past 25 years at Casa Maria Worker House in Tucson's South Side. He not only serves the poor daily, but also works to protect the rights of the poor.

Each month's key theme highlights one of the points of the Pastoral Plan and one of the Seven Key Themes of Social Justice. The *Seven Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching* and the *Consistent Ethic of Life* have been left as reference in pages 2 and 3.



December's Key Theme: To Witness With Love; Call to Family, Community, and Participation in Society, Seeking Together the Common Good

By Fr. JoJo Tabo, OMOS

With the increasing flow of immigrants, there are enough reasons to feel a stranger to your own land. Even if you do not travel that much within the confines of the city, you know what it feels to be a stranger when you find yourself in a place where no one looks like you, where you do not know the language, where the street signs and the words on the window of the shops are hard to read and pronounce, and when your car breaks down in a neighborhood where people who pass by offer no help at all, you know exactly what it is to be a stranger. You get a real sense what other people feel when they have no place to stay for the night, when they persistently extend their hands in the street for a coin, and when they come to the church premises with empty stomach. But whether or not we give them what they need, we can safely assume that they seek more than food, shelter, clothing or a coin (although some people do). A welcoming gesture from a community that knows no bounds speaks a great deal to them. Surely, they want to belong to the body of Christ and not just identified as "the few nameless individuals" who normally come back only when they need something.

Christian identity involves not only who we think we are but also who we think we are not. It is our premonitions that the world will be a better place if people around us share the same beliefs, culture, status, etc. At the core of our faith however, lies the fundamental tenet to befriend and love the stranger for we do feel strangers in our own land. Solidarity takes us out of our comfort zones to free our hearts for God's glory and majesty.

Reflections:

1. When did I become a stranger? And what did I do?
2. How do I treat a stranger?
3. How can I be more loving to my neighbor?

December/2006

- 1st** ♦ World AIDS day
- 2nd** ♦ International Day for the abolition of Slavery.
- 3rd** ♦ *First Sunday of Advent* ♦ International Day of Disabled Persons
- 5th-12th** ♦ Chanukah & Hanukah
- 7th** ♦ *Gaudium et Spes (Paul VI – 1965)*
- 8th** ♦ *Immaculate Conception*
- 10th** ♦ Human Rights Day
- 12th** ♦ Our Lady of Guadalupe
- 14th** ♦ St. John of the Cross
- 25th** ♦ *Christmas*
- 26th** ♦ *Feast of the holy Family*
- 26th – Jan/1** ♦ Kwanzaa (African Heritage)
- 29th – Jan/1** ♦ Hajj (Annual Pilgrimage to Mecca, Islamic)
- 30th** ♦ *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (P. Paul II – 1987)*
- 31st** ♦ Last day of the UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)

January/2007**1st ♦ Mary Mother of God ♦**
World Day for Peace**6th ♦ Epiphany****7th ♦ Baptism of the Lord****7th-13th ♦ National Migration
Week (USCCB)****15th ♦ Martin Luther King, Jr.****16th ♦ Religious Freedom Day****18th ♦ Chinese New Year**
(Confucian/Daoist/Buddhist)**20th ♦ Islamic New Year****22nd ♦ Strangers No Longer:
Together on the Journey of Hope**
(Pastoral Letter – 2003)**17th ♦ International Day for the
Eradication of Poverty****27th ♦ Auschwitz death camp
liberation, 1945****28th ♦ The Puebla Conference
Document, 1979****30th ♦ Ghandi's Death, 1948****31th ♦ Thomas Merton's Birth,
1915****January's Key Theme: To Reach Out to the Least; The
Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

By Jeanne Langer, St. Vincent de Paul

Most of us have the luxury to ask, "What shall I eat for dinner today?" We have the option of choosing what will fill our hunger. The poor, on the other hand, do not often have that option. They ask, "Where can I find something to feed my children today?" The economically poor within our community struggle daily to provide food for their family. Loss of employment, illness or estrangement from society itself often leads to a seemingly endless cycle of unpaid bills, eviction and zero funds and barren table.

As we study the *Seven Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching* it becomes clear the practice of charity is an integral part of truly living a Catholic life. Every human has fundamental human dignity that comes from God, not from any human attribute or accomplishment. Every human has a right to life and to the material support required to live a truly human existence. The right to a truly human life leads directly to the right to enough food to sustain life with dignity.

The opportunities to feed the poor are numerous in Tucson and in our own parish community. The Community Food Bank relies not only on donations but on volunteers to sort and shelve. Casa Maria and Primavera are supported by several generous men and women of Our Mother of Sorrows who regularly prepare sandwiches and hot meals for the homeless. St. Vincent de Paul Society members are available mornings Monday through Saturday responding to requests for emergency food boxes.

Prayer/Reflection

- Read Mt. 25:31-46. Jesus teaches us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.
- Pray daily for the poor and vulnerable
- How might I help ease the daily struggles of the poor?

Consistent Ethic Of Life

"Where life is involved, the service of charity must be profoundly consistent. It cannot tolerate bias and discrimination, for human life is sacred and inviolable at every stage and in every situation; it is an indivisible good." (The Gospel of Life, no. 87 by John Paul II).

Simply put, the teaching of our Catholic faith tells us that all life is sacred and must be protected, from the womb to the tomb. All people have a right to life. Violence against a human life for any reason is not a solution for any of the problems faced by our society.

Cardinal Bernardin stated that capital punishment, for example is not the same as abortion, but the issues are linked by the value and defense of life that is placed on both. "When human life is considered 'cheap' or easily expendable in one area, eventually nothing is held as sacred and all lives are in jeopardy."

February's Theme: To Reach Out to the Least; The Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

By Brian Flagg

Like the rest of Scripture, especially the Gospels, this title means just what it says. It is quite simple and direct, no? Our Church, in both recent and historic documents and encyclicals, eloquently and beautifully proclaims its preferential option for the poor.

Economic Justice for all: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy (1986) says that “though in the Gospels, and in the New Testament as a whole, the offer of salvation is extended to all peoples. Jesus takes the side of those most in need, physically and spiritually. The example of Jesus poses a number of challenges to the contemporary church.” I feel that this is possibly the understatement of the century.

The bishops go on to say that the preferential option imposes a prophetic mandate to speak for those who have no one to speak for them, to be a defender of the defenseless, who in biblical terms are the poor. It also demands a compassionate vision that enables the Church to see things from the side of the poor and powerless and to assess lifestyle, policies and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. The obligation to evaluate social and economic activity from the viewpoint of the poor and the powerless arises from the radical command to love one's neighbor as one's self.

It is great that the U.S. Bishops wrote these words in 1986, but they are hollow and empty without prophetic and concrete actions to back them up. It is up to all people to give clear witness to their faith. Poor people, the ones God cares about the most, are suffering. The time for liberation is now. May the Holy Spirit infuse poor and working people to pray and work and sacrifice so that the preferential option for the poor becomes a much more real part of what it means to be Catholic and not just pretty words on the page of some document.

Prayer/Reflection:

- Read Matthew 22:34-40
- Read Luke 10:29. Who is your neighbor
- In what ways do I care for the poor?
- In what ways do I work for justice?

February/2007

African American History Month

2nd ♦ Presentation of the Lord (Feast)

11th ♦ World Day of the Sick

13th ♦ Economic Justice in South Africa – Pastoral Statement (1999)

14th ♦ Valentine's Day

19th ♦ Presidents Day

21st ♦ Ash Wednesday

22nd ♦ Chair Of St. Peter, apostle (Feast)

25th ♦ First Sunday of Lent

Seven Key Themes Of Catholic Social Teaching

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person: We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.
2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation: We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.
3. Rights and Responsibilities: Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency.
4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: Mt 25:31-46 instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.
5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers: If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected.
6. Solidarity: We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live.
7. Care for God's Creation: We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation.

In this issue:

- http://www.osjspm.org/economic_justice_for_all.aspx *Economic Justice for All (US Catholic Bishops, 1986)*
- <http://www.nccbuscc.org/mrs/stranger.shtml> *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*
- http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council *Gaudium et Spes*
- http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*
- <http://www.nccbuscc.org/mrs/nmw/bishopsletters.shtml> *National Migration Week 2007*
- <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP791228.htm> *Puebla 1979 - Pope Paul II Opening Address*
- <http://www.aciprensa.com/Docum/puebla.htm> *Puebla 1979 documents (in Spanish)*
- <http://www.kas.org.za/Publications/SeminarReports/Bridgingthegapbetweenrichandpoor/statement.pdf>
“Economic Justice in South Africa” A Pastoral Statement
- <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/africa.htm> *A Call to Solidarity with Africa (USCCB)*

General Links

- <http://www.vatican.va> The Vatican’s website
- <http://www.usccb.org> U.S. Conference Of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
- <http://arizonainterfaith.org/pciaff.html> Pima County Interfaith Council’s Information Page
- <http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab/bible> The New American Bible (online)

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