

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel
2121 S. Rural Rd.
Tempe, AZ 85282
Phone: 480-966-1974

Email:
thieme@asu.edu



The Vincentian

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Conference

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Thanksgiving Food Drive 2008

A big **thank you** to all the generous parishioners who participated in our annual Thanksgiving food drive. We collected 134 banana boxes of non-perishable food, by far exceeding the results of previous years.

We also benefited from a food drive organized by **Seton Catholic High School's Robotics Team 1212**. Under the leadership of Mike Garvey, these young people organized a **Trick-or-Treat for the Hungry** drive and collected 8 banana boxes full of non-perishable items for our pantry. Thanks a lot, Robotic Team 1212, for a job well done and very much appreciated.



July to September 2008 Financial Report

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Number of families visited: | 537 |
| Food boxes delivered: | 1074 |
| Food purchased: | \$3,139.79 |
| Rental Assistance: | \$8,111.31 |
| Utility Assistance: | \$7,690.60 |
| Clothes/Transportation/Furniture | \$2,369.69 |



From the President's Pen

In my last letter, I detailed many of the activities sponsored by the young people of Mt. Carmel parish and school. There is one

group that also deserves special recognition: the Cub Scouts. Each year, the scouts have a gala cake walk and raise an amazing amount of money. Recently, they donated \$890 to our conference. We used these extra funds to ensure that over **100 families received Thanksgiving boxes** containing all the trimmings for a traditional turkey dinner.

Now we are in the midst of the **Adopt-A-Family (AAF) program** and could use some more sponsors. This year we hope to match approximately 100 needy families who live within the boundaries of OLMC. The families are matched with individual or corporate sponsors who arrange gifts for each member of the family, including clothing and toys for the little ones. In addition, sponsors provide the fixings for the holiday meal, complete with turkey, ham, or roast beef for tamales.

It is not too late to **join the list of sponsors**. Just pick up a brightly colored flyer from the back of the church or call our office at 480-966-1974 to participate.

Thank you for always caring and sharing in His name. Merry Christmas and God's blessings on you and yours.

Barbara Pawlak

Spotlight on ...



Pat and Rita Malafronte joined our conference in 2003. Every Tuesday they deliver food boxes to needy families. “The need is so great,” Rita says, “and people are so thankful for the groceries we bring. It is wonderful to see the smiles on the kids’ faces, especially when the boxes contain some candy.”

Pat and Rita are natives of New York City, where they met at a Catholic dance. They have been married for 42 years, 34 years of which were spent in Brooklyn. Pat first worked as a sanitation engineer and superintendent at the Sanitation Department in New York, then as a maintenance supervisor with the U.S. Food Service. Before their two daughters were born, Rita worked as a private secretary in a brokerage house.

Since their retirement, Pat and Rita have been very active not only in the St. Vincent de Paul Society, but also in the Knights of Columbus. Currently, Pat is serving as Grand Knight of Council #6627 at OLMC, and he is also a 4th Degree Knight of the San Xavier Del Bac Assembly. With his outgoing personality, he is very successful raising funds for People with Intellectual Disabilities during the annual “Tootsie Roll Drive” and helping with the OLMC Spring Festival. He

has volunteered to serve as the Knights of Columbus Chairperson for the 2009 OLMC Festival. Together with Rita, he serves as a money counter at OLMC once a month.

Rita is a member of the San Xavier Del Bac 4th Degree Assembly Women Auxiliary, a group that provides Christmas packages to patients of the Desert Vista Behavioral Hospital. As a member of the St. Monica’s Guild, she also enjoys being an active member of the Sodality at OLMC.

Pat with his infectious smile and Rita with her gentle, warm personality are much-appreciated members of our conference.



Jesus Knew

(by Trisha Brandt-Fox)

It was the day before Christmas Eve. My family had decided to sponsor a needy family in the St. Vincent de Paul Christmas program, and I was about to bring gifts to the “adopted” family. I felt uncomfortable. How would I be received? Would they be kind and loving, or would they resent me because they had to ask for help? It was too late to turn back, so I went.

When I arrived at the two-room apartment, I was struck by the lack of Christmas decorations. There were no Christmas gifts, no Christmas tree, no Christmas music, nothing but a string of multi-colored blinking lights over the window. Zena, the mother of two children, explained to me that her hours at work had been cut and that there was no money for Christmas this year. The family did not even have enough money for beds. The grandmother slept on the couch, the mother in a chair, her handicapped son on a twin bed, and the youngest daughter on the floor. My mind drifted to the Blessed Mother and how, in the stable, she slept on the hay.

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Jesus Knew (cont. from p.2)

“Things are hard,” Zena said, “but I am not complaining. No matter if my heart gets broken, the world does not stop for my grief.” I asked her what we should pray about. Holding her children’s hands tenderly, she replied, “For happy children.”

Before leaving, I asked her daughter what she wanted for Christmas. “My mom told me to say ‘crayons’, but what I really want is a Water Babies Baby Doll, the one with a pink hat.” I could not believe it. Over in the Santa bag that I had dropped off by the door was the very doll she wanted. I did not know about this wish. I guess Jesus knew.

As we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family the Sunday after Christmas, let us remember all the families of the world that are experiencing difficult situations. May all of our struggles be lessened and may all of us feel the love of Jesus in our hearts this year.

In Memory of John Reigelsberger



John was a member of our conference for 23 years. We miss his cheerful and always smiling face.

John volunteered many years at the St. Vincent de Paul thrift store in Mesa.

He also worked in the Food Reclamation Center in downtown Phoenix, where he helped sort food to be distributed to all 95 conferences in the diocese.

He also delivered food boxes to needy families weekly and volunteered in many other ways, using his practical skills. For instance, he helped rewire a dilapidated trailer and installed a Butane tank so the family could have electric lights and a stove to cook meals. The poor of our parish have lost a friend.



Homeless Men’s Christmas Memories

(by Debbie Corte)

What do you think when you encounter a homeless man begging at a street corner? Do you see “a filthy and lazy bum” or “a person down on his luck”?

Participating in our Outreach Program for the Homeless, I recently had the opportunity to talk with some homeless people waiting for a meal on the lawn of a dreary public dining room in downtown Phoenix. As the conversation turned to Christmas, I knew without a doubt that the homeless are like me, sharing the same need for love and joy.

There was Dice, a giant of a man with hardened facial features. “I don’t celebrate Christmas,” he said. As I kept asking if he had any pleasant Christmas memories, my interest in his life softened his heart. He confessed that his grandmother, who raised him, died on Christmas day.

“She was a good woman,” he reminisced. “If she wasn’t cooking, she was ironing or going to church. She always took an interest in me and made sure I did not get mixed up with the wrong crowd.”

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Homeless Men's Christmas Memories (cont. from p. 3)

Then there was Cutis, who was one of eight children when he was growing up. His mother would only have money for a few of her children every Christmas. He remembers receiving nothing but oranges and grapefruit, while his twin brother would find a toy waiting for him. "But I never complained," Cutis said. "My mother loved us all, and I was grateful for that."

Finally there was Darryl, a former drug addict, who now lives in a halfway house. Darryl gratefully remembers his stepfather who always brought lots of toys on Christmas day. He also bought groceries every Friday and provided financial security for his family. With his help, Darryl was able to persevere through his struggles. This month he will be graduating from college, after completing his coursework in just three years. What a Christmas gift!

Let's not forget our brothers and sisters who don't have a home or a family during this season of peace and joy.

Tax Credit for Donation to St. Vincent de Paul

(submitted by Pat Malafronte)

Did you know that you can make a **donation** to SVdP of up to **\$400** per married household (**\$200 for singles**) and **deduct this amount dollar for dollar from your taxes** as a tax credit for the working poor? (Note that your contribution under this program will not affect your gift to the Private or Public School Tuition funds).

What is a tax credit? A tax credit is a full refund of your money provided you have a tax liability equal to or exceeding your donation. A tax credit differs from a tax deduction in that a credit allows you to subtract your donation from your State of Arizona tax dollar for dollar.

How does it work?

1. Establish a baseline year and amount (as early as 1996). The credit is figured on the amount given over and above the baseline year. To be eligible for this credit, you must have itemized deductions and deducted charitable contributions on your baseline year's tax return.
2. Make a tax-deductible donation to St. Vincent de Paul prior to December 31, 2008.
3. Itemize your charitable deductions on the Federal Schedule A, including your donation to St. Vincent de Paul, for a Federal Tax deduction. NOTE: On Arizona Schedule A "Itemized Deductions Adjustments" write in amount donated to SVdP on Line 14 and follow the instructions.
4. Complete Arizona Tax Forms 321 and 301. The statement from St. Vincent de Paul showing your total donations for the year 2008 (mailed to you in January 2009) is necessary for documenting your donation.
5. On page 1 of Arizona Form #140, you may take a dollar for dollar credit. The State of Arizona will reduce the amount you owe in state taxes by up to \$400 for your donation to SVdP. (Remember that you also get a federal tax deduction).

Thank you for considering St. Vincent de Paul for the tax credit for the working poor. Donating up to \$400 will not cost you a cent, but it will significantly increase the assistance that we can provide to the needy in our community.