

The Vincentian

Published by Our Lady of Mount Carmel Conference
of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul
2121 S. Rural Road, Tempe, AZ 85282
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Summer 2005
Member of Fr. McCready Council
District 12

Spotlight on ...



Mary Ziegman actively joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society after her husband Dick, a much appreciated and beloved member of our conference for many years, passed away in 2002. To continue his work, she decided to team up with her friend, Mary Rasmussen, and

deliver food to needy families. Blessed with excellent health at the age of 80, she does not mind carrying food up to the upper floor of apartment complexes. "We just repackage the food from the big banana boxes into smaller grocery bags," she explains with a smile, "so we don't break our backs."

Mary has been active all of her life. After attending Dyke Business College in Cleveland, Ohio, she worked as a secretary for the General Manager of the YMCA's in the Cleveland area. This is where she and her husband, John Martin, were blessed with a family of six children. Widowed at the early age of 40, she and Dick Ziegman, a longtime friend, re-met in Ohio. Dick was also widowed and had seven children of his own. With her positive outlook on life and her boundless energy, Mary was the right person to join Dick in taking on the enormous task of caring for thirteen children. Even now she never has a dull moment and enjoys spending time with her 36 grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

In addition to tending to her family, Mary has always been actively involved with life issues. She was a Board member of the Arizona Right to Life Committee, and she is one of the founding members of the Aid to Women Center in Tempe. For five years, she also taught piano lessons at the Sisters of the Good Shepherd School. In her spare time, she still enjoys her music and is a member of a Bible Study Group, a bridge club, and a ladies' golf club.

Despite her busy life, delivering food is one of her priorities. "It is such a marvelous, enriching experience," she says. "We meet the sweetest people. The children are so endearing, and it is a joy to serve the families in their needs." Without a doubt, Mary is a blessing to the families and a true inspiration to our conference members.

Summer Food Drive

We will have our Summer Food Drive on **June 25th and 26th**. Non-perishable food items (canned tuna or meat, pasta, pasta sauce, canned vegetables, refried beans, breakfast cereal) and hygienic products (shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, shaving gear, tooth paste/brushes) will be accepted in front of McCready Hall before and after all the weekend masses. We appreciate your generosity.

Congratulations!

We are proud of our very own **Valerie Nigro**. The Phoenix Diocesan Council of Catholic Women granted her the 2005 Women of the Year Award.



Praying with the People we Serve

(by Valerie and Bart Nigro)

Having experienced some anxiety over praying with our clients during home visits, we have been eager to attend the St. Vincent de Paul workshop that addressed this topic. The session we attended was held at St. Teresa's parish on January 24 and was expertly led by Jack Ahern and Roseanne Gutierrez.

In the first section of the workshop, we reflected on prayer. Prayer transforms our own personal lives. Through prayer, we learn to love ourselves, forgive ourselves, give ourselves to God, and see God working in our lives. The presence of God within us makes it possible for us to bring God's unconditional love into the lives of the people we serve, as fellow travelers on the journey of life.

In the second half of the workshop, we were given home visit guidelines in regard to prayer. First of all, we wear a simple wooden cross so the people we serve will know we are Christians. Then, before the home visit, we pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance. If appropriate, after "taking care of business," we say in a non-threatening way, "May we say a little prayer with you?" If they agree, we stand or sit with the clients between us, then ask, "May I bless you?" and trace a cross on their forehead. The power of touch is very important, so we then discreetly place a hand on their shoulder or hold hands. Be sensitive to the situation, we were reminded, and use appropriate words. If they are non-Christians, you may choose to pray to "our loving creator," for example.

It is not necessary to say a long prayer. Our loving presence is what matters the most. We are God's instrument. He is the healer. Be open to the Holy Spirit and try to include the following elements in your prayer: pray for the obvious (for a job, e.g.), pray to lift their self-image, pray for hope that the situation will improve, pray that God will come into their lives, and let them know that He loves them. Always finish with words of thanksgiving, and then say to them, "Please pray for us, too." If the family does not wish to have you pray with them, you can still let them know that you will say a prayer for them later.

After the presentation, we broke into small groups and practiced what we had learned, an excellent exercise. The entire workshop was very useful. It really touched our hearts and helped us grow spiritually. For greater depth of understanding, we highly recommend this training.

Sample Prayer with our Clients

Mary Rasmussen and Mary Ziegman always make it a point to pray with their clients. They were kind enough to share their prayer with us:



Dear Heavenly Father,
We know that when two or three are gathered in your name, you are in our midst. Let us feel your presence, Lord. We praise you and thank you for all your blessings. Keep this family in good health; help the children to perform well in school. Also, Lord, answer the prayers and desires that this family holds in their hearts. (Then we ask the family if they would like to add a prayer of their own.) We place this family in your care, Lord, and trust that you will fulfill their needs.

Bless those who have donated the food and supported the St. Vincent de Paul Society. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Home Visits

(by Mary Rasmussen and Mary Ziegman)

We like to introduce ourselves as Mary and Mary – or Maria and Maria – when we deliver food boxes on Monday mornings.

Many of our clients speak only Spanish. Even if they understand some English, they are reluctant to speak it. If children are present, they will translate for us.

Since the food boxes are heavy, we enlist the family members to help carry them. To lighten the load, we transfer some heavy items to paper bags. Even the children delight in carrying a loaf of bread or a box of cereal.

We give out information regarding low-cost food from several other organizations. United Food bank and Paz de Cristo are in our area. There are also sources of possible job opportunities. We also make our Lady of Mt. Carmel's most recent church bulletin available.

When requested, we give the clients a voucher, which enables them to shop for specific clothing items at the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store.

Before departing, we join hands, acknowledging God's presence with us. We pray for the family's needs and thank Him for our daily blessings.

Rosaries are offered along with a leaflet of "How to Pray the Rosary," printed in both English and Spanish. The rosaries are made by a dedicated group of ladies from Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

It's a pleasure to help these families in our small way because they are so grateful.

Prayer "Event"

(by Ben Picone)

A while ago, we were delivering a food box to a lady with several children. As we were leaving and were ready to join hands for a prayer, her brother came in at the door. We invited him to pray with us.

After we had said a short prayer, the brother took over. He must have been a minister in training; he kept praying for about five minutes. He also must have been a National Football League line backer. He squeezed my hand in his hand, which was about twice the size as mine. It took me a while to regain circulation and feeling back in my hand. I remember this prayer to this very day. It is true that sometimes prayer leaves us with an indelible impression.

In Memoriam: Gerry Green

Gerry Green, who was a member of our conference since 1971, passed away on May 29th at the age of 87. While he was active in our conference, he set an exemplary standard of service and dedication that is hard to meet.

Gerry was an extremely generous man. He would often scour the ads of newspapers to find out deals on canned beans, corn, and fruits, buy as many boxes as the store was willing to sell to him, and place the items on the shelves in our pantry. When offered a reimbursement for his expenses, he would just shrug and say, "That's part of my contribution."

Until recently, he would spend an average of 40 hours a week picking up our food allotment from the St. Vincent de Paul warehouse in Phoenix or driving to various bakeries in the Valley to pick up bread. Per week, he would handle 500-600 loaves of bread and about 14,000 pounds of canned foods, rice, and hygienic items.

Gerry impressed by his strong work ethic, and he never wasted anything. If a bag of rice or beans had broken, he refused to throw it out, but repackaged the contents into small plastic bags, even if it took him hours. Although his strength was decreasing over the years, he never slowed down. When asked how he was doing, he would reply with his dry sense of humor, "Nobody has told me yet," or "It's too early to tell."

Gerry was a devout man who made it a point to attend daily mass with Rosemary, his wife of 57 years. Often, on Mondays, before picking up bread, he would spend time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. He had a strong love of the Lord and of the poor in accordance with Mt. 25:40: "As often as you do these things for the least of My brethren, you do them for Me." The Lord will surely say to him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant.... Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Mt. 25:21).

In honor of his contribution to our conference, the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel St. Vincent de Paul Lifetime Achievement Award, of which he would have been the first recipient, will be re-named the "Gerry Green Lifetime Achievement Award."