



# The Vincentian

Newsletter for supporters of the  
Society of St. Vincent de Paul,  
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Conference

Spring 2006



## An Experience of Absolute Peace

(by Ben Picone)

I believe that quite a few of us Christians are blessed with spiritual experiences, which, brief as they may be, are so overwhelming and so personal that we are reluctant for a long time to share them with others. About 15 years ago, I experienced a feeling of profound peace. It was so deep that it shut off all other emotions and left me in complete awe.

Msgr. McCready had planned a special celebration to commemorate the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Juan Diego in Mexico. As a member of an ad hoc committee, which my wife, Eva, had pushed me to join, I found myself very much involved. My job was to moderate the event.

During a bilingual mass, some of our parishioners would perform a play reenacting the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Juan Diego and Juan's struggle to find credence with the Bishop. We also decided that a painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe should be displayed in the church. I remembered that I had seen a painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe behind a sofa in the priests' recreation room on the second floor of the rectory, where I had played Poker with Msgr. McCready once in a while. In a procession, this painting was to be carried into the church before Mass and later transferred to a display case in the foyer, where it has found its permanent place. After the ceremony, there would be a reception with food and drinks as well as Mariachi music.

The whole ceremony was beautiful. After everyone had left the church to enjoy the food and music, I made the rounds to check the screws of the display case, pick up scraps of paper, and make sure that everything was in its place. On the way to McCready Hall, I paused to kneel and give thanks that everything had gone so well.

It was then that it happened: I was enveloped by a beam of light, approximately three feet in diameter. I felt absolute peace. Nothing else mattered. It was an overwhelming sense of peace. After what must have been about one minute, the beam faded away. I felt truly blessed. I don't know where this blessing came from, but I like to think that it was Our Lady of Guadalupe saying thanks for the honor bestowed on her.

## Young Mother in Need of a Helping Hand

(by Valerie and Bart Nigro)

It was a very cold day when we visited a young single mother and her six-year-old child. We knocked at the door and were warmly invited into a chilly room. The little girl, wrapped in a blanket, was playing on the floor with her dolls. A tiny candle lit the room, and there was some light coming from the adjacent kitchen. Except for a shabby couch, which also served as a bed, the room was unfurnished.

The mother had lost her job after her car had been totaled in an auto accident. The loss of her job had caused her to drop out of school, too. Shortly after the accident, her apartment had burned out. Nothing had been saved from the fire, other than

some clothing. The Red Cross had placed the young woman and her daughter into the apartment they now occupied, but due to financial problems, they were facing eviction.

It was admirable that the mother tried to stay upbeat about the whole situation. She was looking for a job and an after-school child care facility she could reach by bus. Once she got back on her feet, she would also return to school.

She was very appreciative of the groceries we brought, of the financial aid we could provide, and especially of the hand-made rosary we gave her.



## SVdP Saving Family from Eviction

(by Adelheid Thieme)

A home, a comfortable place where we can eat, sleep, and relax after a hard day's work, is something that most of us take for granted. It is easy to forget that, for many families, the loss of a job may quickly lead to eviction.

One recent Wednesday afternoon, Ela and I were visiting a family in a housing complex in east Tempe, a run-down place where those desperate for accommodation are charged \$165 per week! Sharon, a mother of two children, ages 7 and 2, was waiting for us in a tiny room that had just enough space for a queen size bed, a chest of drawers with a TV set, and a small loveseat. At the sight of the two food boxes that we carried, her face lit up. The children started to inspect the food boxes for any goodies that they could find.

As soon as the children had settled down, Sharon began to tell us about her situation, which was pretty desperate. David, her husband, had lost his job a few weeks ago. When their savings had been used up, they had been evicted from their apartment. David had been able to borrow some money from a family member to rent a room in the shabby abode where the family was now staying. However, if they did not find money for the next week by the end of the day, they would be out on the street again. Meanwhile, David had found

another job, but his first paycheck would not come for another week. They had contacted several friends, yet as soon as they had heard about the family's financial need, they had kept their distance. On top of all that, Sharon was about to give birth to their third child; she had been scheduled for a Caesarian section for the following Monday.

On the verge of tears, Sharon said, "I feel so overwhelmed, especially with the new baby coming soon. Our friends have all abandoned us, and the government agencies tell us that they do not help with the rent in motels that charge weekly rates. I am at the end of my rope."

We reassured her that our conference had the funds to pay her rent for the next week. We went to the manager's office right away to drop off a check. As we left the office, Sharon was waiting outside, and we handed her the receipt. She was so relieved that she started crying. After she had regained her composure, she said, "You cannot imagine how much this means to me. You have saved us from eviction. Getting evicted from our old apartment was the most horrible experience I have ever had. I was asleep on the bed with my toddler when the sheriff knocked on the door. He told me in a gruff voice, 'Wake up, lady. You have 15 minutes. Take as much as you can before I exchange the locks.' When I realized what was going on, I started crying so hard that I could not think clearly. I quickly stuffed the children's toys and clothes in a bag, packed a few food items, grabbed my purse and left. My husband and I just had the clothes on our backs. We lost everything else."

As we were ready to leave, Sharon gave us a warm hug. We were glad that we were able to help her family maintain a humble home and some degree of safety and dignity. We wished God's blessings on her and promised we would pray for a safe delivery of her baby.

---

## Thank you

We would like to thank **Walmart** for giving our conference a generous donation of \$1,000. On Turkey Tuesday, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, **Basha's** allowed us to collect turkeys in front of the store at Southern and McClintock, donated 300 turkeys, and rewarded each shopper who donated a turkey with a free pumpkin pie.

## Meet our Volunteers



(Mary Vrizuella (left), and her sister, Linda Flores)

Mary Vrizuella and her sister, Linda Flores, joined our conference in November 2003. They vividly remember their first “assignment,” accepting turkeys in front of Basha’s store the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. “It was a humbling and spiritual experience,” Mary recalls. “We had a lump in our throats and tears in our eyes the whole day. It was awesome to see the many wonderful caring people wanting to help the less fortunate. Some of them shared with us that they were once in need of help themselves. Some of the people gave a lot and others gave what they could, but all felt blessed and thankful that they could help.”

After this initial experience, Linda and Mary got “hooked.” They started delivering food boxes every Monday. On Tuesdays, they answered the office phones, taking requests from clients, especially those who spoke only Spanish. It gave them a chance to lend an ear to their special needs and to be compassionate and understanding.

Mary and Linda know what it is like to be on the receiving end of the generosity of an organization like St. Vincent de Paul. When they deliver food to the clients and see little children rummaging through the boxes and looking for goodies, their minds are flooded with memories of their own childhood. Linda and Mary, who come from a family of six children, reminisce: “Growing up, we really didn’t know we were poor. One thing for sure was that we had plenty of love around us.

But the Salvation Army and the school nurses were our angels. We received much needed help from various churches, and the Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets and toys were a real treat.”

Mary has always had a strong connection with Mt. Carmel. She attended Mt. Carmel School at the time when classes were held in the basement of the old church on College and University. She and her husband got married in McCready Hall in 1964. They had two wonderful children, Molly and Tony. Together with her husband, Mary owned and ran a swimming pool construction business for twenty years. Linda, who has one daughter, Anne, worked in the same business, taking care of payroll.

Now that Mary and Linda are semi-retired (Mary still works five hours at a school cafeteria), they have more time for themselves. Linda enjoys embroidery and spending time with her two grandchildren. She also volunteers at the Cahill Senior Center. Mary is a member of the Tempe Parks and Recreation “Hiking for Women Only Club,” which organizes extensive hikes in the surrounding desert. Every Friday, the two sisters go to the movies and to dinner together. They also cherish the peace and quiet of their cabin in the Heber-Overgaard area.

In addition to food deliveries, Mary does the bread run for our pantry. Twice a week, she goes to the Rainbow and Sara Lee warehouse and pick up a huge load of bread. After work, Mary also stops at the pantry twice a week to prepare food boxes for our home visit teams. She cleans up and stocks the shelves as needed. For two consecutive years, Mary has also spearheaded the Summer and Thanksgiving food drives in our parish.

Our conference is blessed to have Mary and Linda as members of our group. They never fail to inspire us with their strong work ethic and their warm smiles.

## 2005 Annual Report

Deliveries to families:	1,755
Number of food boxes:	3,510
Clothing vouchers:	96
Number of families adopted for Christmas:	137



# Volunteers Welcome

**Society of St. Vincent de Paul**  
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Conference  
2121 S. Rural Road  
Tempe, Arizona 85282  
(480) 966-1974

**Our conference is looking for a few good workers. We can use some help in the following areas:**

**Intake Person:** Develop an initial understanding of clients' needs by answering the office phones (Mondays through Saturdays from 9-11am) or return calls that clients left on the answering machine (every day of the week, afternoon or evening)

**Food Delivery/Home Visit Team:** Deliver food boxes, interview clients to assess additional needs, provide financial and referral assistance (daily, time flexible).

**Pantry Helper:** Prepare food boxes, stock shelves, maintain pantry.

**Bread Pick-up:** Drive to warehouse and pick up donated bread (Tuesdays, Fridays 12:30-2:00; Sunday evening)

**Community Coordinator:** Assist in referrals for specific needs clients; maintain contact with other assistance agencies.

**Special Cases Advocate:** Provide individualized assistance and ongoing support to clients with special needs.

Some training is required.

If you feel called to any of these ministries, please complete the form on the right and mail it to us.

Please contact me to discuss how I may participate in the work of serving the "poor, suffering and forgotten."

**NAME:**

---

**ADDRESS:**

---

**CITY:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Best time to reach me:**

---

**From the specific duties described above, tell us where you feel you can help.**

---

---

---

**Volunteer days/hours available:**

---

---