

St. John Neumann
**SOCIAL
CONCERNS**



Your quarterly update of all that's going on within the Social Concerns community here at St. John Neumann.



New hope for our friends in Chiltiupan - pages 4-5

Look back at 2011 to see what you accomplished - page 6

Mission Statement

The mission of the St. John Neumann Social Concerns Committee is to support and empower individuals, families and faith communities as they meet the challenges of life and address conditions of society. This will be done by:

- ▶ encouraging the parish to deepen its understanding of Catholic social teaching and social concerns.
- ▶ supporting and/or developing programs of outreach and service for identifiable needs in the parish and local community.
- ▶ speaking out for people who are poor and vulnerable.
- ▶ working for social policies that reflect justice and a respect for human dignity.

Bishops' letter to immigrants urges humane immigration reform

Catholic social teaching states that 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. With that in mind, Hispanic/Latino bishops all across the country sent an open letter to immigrants supporting them in their struggles. One passage reads: "We are also very aware of the pain suffered by those families who have experienced the deportation of one of their members. We are conscious of the frustration of youth and young adults who have grown up in this country and whose dreams are shattered because they lack legal immigration status. We also know of the anguish of those who live daily under the threat of deportation. This situation cries out to God for a worthy and humane solution".

Another section of the bishops' letter recalls Jesus' words. They state: "We who are citizens and permanent residents of this country cannot forget that almost all of us, we or our ancestors, have come from other lands and together with immigrants from various nations and cultures, have formed a new nation. Now we ought to open our hearts and arms to the recently arrived, just as Jesus asks us to do when he says, 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was alien and you took me into your house' (MT 25:35). These words of the Lord Jesus can be applied to the new immigrants among us". Please pray for humane immigration reform.

Fish fries not only for fine dining - but a big help to those in need

St. John Neumann will once again be sponsoring their "World Famous Fish Fries" on the Fridays in March. The Fish Fries, which began in 1997 have become well-known through the southwestern suburbs of Cleveland and always feature the final Fish Fry (March 30) as a Fish Fry where the entire gross receipts go to the needy.

Over the past five years or so the Fish Fry for the needy has grossed over \$20,000 each year to be distributed to the needy. The Fish Fry itself usually grosses \$11,000 - \$12,000; the tip jar from all five fish fries usually comes in around \$2,000 and the corporate sponsors pay \$200 for a corporate sign in the Activity Center which is up during the entire season of Fish Fries. We usually average 35-40 sponsors.

When you add up the amounts you normally come up with over \$20,000. These monies are distributed often among St. Augustine Food Center, Strongsville Food Bank, La Sagrada Familia Parish (a sister parish on Cleveland's near west side that we have done some ministry with) and the Diocesan Mission in El Salvador. The monies that went to El Salvador last year helped many in that country to get stoves in their living space and also put roofs over many of their homes.

We again encourage you to volunteer to work one, two, three, four or all five of the Fish Fries or whichever ones you are able. People who visit us during the Fish Fries are amazed at how families, teens, children all help out. There is a great spirit present, people run into people they haven't seen and catch up and it is a wonderful way to connect with other parishioners at St. John Neumann.

Thanks in advance to all those who make this time of the year a time to grow in our stewardship at St. John Neumann Parish in the sharing of our time, talents and resources. May God Bless all of you!

SVDP Update:

The St. Vincent DePaul was able to donate to many projects this past Christmas because of the generosity of our parishioners. We supplied Malachi House with 31 duffel bags, socks, underwear and sweat shirts...We also purchased \$500 worth of Walmart gift cards for Cuyahoga County Family Services for gifts for teen girls. We also purchased gifts for families that we had helped during the year...\$600 was also donated to the Plumlee Childrens Fund.

Letter from the Bishop

Regarding the legislation that would make it mandatory for employers to pay for measures that are not consistent with Catholic teaching about one's right to life we are making the following letter from Bishop Lennon available in this issue of our Social Concerns Newsletter. In addition we would also recommend that parishioners of St. John Neumann Roman Catholic Church also visit the web page of our National Bishops - usccb.org. This is the same letter that was available to parishioners the weekend of January 29 and was in our bulletin the weekend of Feb. 4/5.

Fr. Bob



40/2012
26 January 2012

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I write to you concerning a serious matter that will negatively impact the Catholic Church in the United States if it is allowed to take effect as planned by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The proposed action of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services strikes at the fundamental right to religious liberty for all citizens of any faith.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced last week that almost all employers, including Catholic employers, will be forced to offer their employees' health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. Almost all health insurers will be forced to include those "services" in the health policies they write, and almost all individuals will be forced to buy that coverage as a part of their policies.

In so ruling, the Administration has cast aside the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States denying to Catholics our Nation's first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. And as a result, unless this rule is overturned, Catholics will be compelled either to violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so). The Administration's sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

We cannot—we will not—comply with this unjust law. People of faith cannot be made second class citizens. We are already joined by our brothers and sisters of all faiths and many others of good will in this important effort to regain our religious freedom. Our parents and grandparents did not come to these shores of America to help build America's cities and towns, its infrastructure and institutions, its enterprise and culture, only to have their posterity stripped of their God given rights. In generations past, all the faithful have witnessed to the importance of the fundamental rights guaranteed by our country's founding documents. I trust that at this moment all of us will stand up for and work for the protection of those rights, especially the right to religious liberty for all America's citizens. Our children and grandchildren deserve nothing less.

Therefore, I ask of you two things. **First**, as a community of faith we must commit ourselves to prayer and fasting that wisdom and justice prevail, and that religious liberty remain a fundamental right for all Americans! Without God, we can do nothing; with God, nothing is impossible. **Second**, I recommend visiting www.usccb.org/conscience to learn more about this severe assault on religious liberty, and how to contact Congress in support of legislation that would reverse the Administration's decision.

Thanking you for your understanding and cooperation on this very important request, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Richard Lennon

Bishop of Cleveland

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Genocide topic of Social Concerns winter meeting

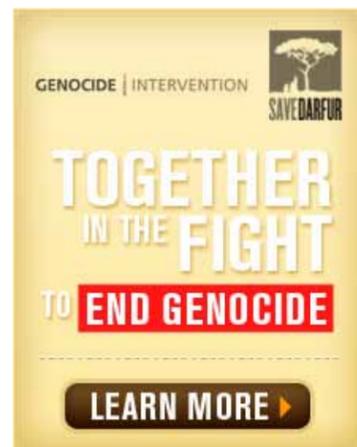
Dr. Richard Clark, Professor of Sociology at John Carroll University, gave a very interesting and thought provoking presentation on genocide at the January 26th quarterly Social Concerns meeting. Dr. Clark is also the University's Director

of the Peace, Justice and Human Rights program and, in 2011, was named a Fellow of the Carl Wilkens Fellowship United to End Genocide. As such, he is one of 55 community leaders throughout the US who are charged with building a permanent anti-genocide constituency willing and able to protect civilians from mass atrocities. Some of Dr. Clark's comments included

the startling fact that since the start of the 20th century, there have been over 175 million homicides attributed to genocide and when the number of people who have been displaced or directly affected by genocide

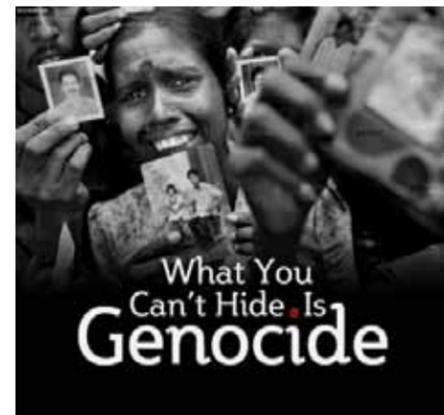
**UNITED TO END
GENOCIDE**

are also taken into account, the number increases to over 1 billion people. He reminded the audience that genocide is still rampant in the world today with situations in Sudan, South Sudan, Lybia, Syria, Cote d'Ivoire, Yemen, Burma (Myanmar), the



Democratic Republic of Congo, China (Falun Gong) and Darfur. Genocide is defined as not only the physical destruction of a race, nationality or religious group within a society, but also the intent to destroy them.

In terms of what can be done to counter



genocide, Dr. Clark stated that genocides cannot exist without government involvement and support because they involve atrocities on a large scale. Therefore, the goals of United To End Genocide are to make human rights and genocide prevention core values in US foreign policy, ensure justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators of mass atrocities and to stop those who would commit, aid or abet mass atrocities.

To learn more about the work of United to End Genocide, visit www.endgenocide.org.

Second SJN mission trip to El Salvador a big success

The eleven parishioners who went on the second SJN Mission Trip to El Salvador came home with wonderful stories about our friends in the beautiful town of Chiltiupan. The 2012 St. John Neumann mission team was made up of **Joe & Ben Wollet, Otto Albert, Ruth Grega, Marty Zachlin, Edina Moore, Perry Starcovic, Nicoletta Putaturo, Mary Ellen & Vicki Ference, and Sharon David.** The mission team left Cleveland on January 18, and returned January 22. We flew to San Salvador where we were met by Sr. Rose Elizabeth Terrell, a member of the Cleveland Mission team. Sr. Rose took us to the place where the four American church women, including two from Cleveland – Sr. Dorothy Kazel and laywoman Jean Donovan – were found after they were murdered in December of 1980.

We spent most of our time in the mountain village of Chiltiupan which is home to 8,000 very poor but joy-filled people. We visited their homes, and celebrated Mass with them. Joe commented, "It was impressive to see over 100 people attending Mass on a week night, especially considering many of them walked an hour to the church." These people who have so little know what is truly important.

We saw some real improvements in the lives of the people of Chiltiupan due to the **generosity of the people of St. John Neumann.** About 100 homes now have the **Eco-cina stoves**, some which were purchased at our **Fiesta and Clam Bake** in 2010 and others with funds from our **fish fry for the poor** in 2011. The houses where the new stoves were in use were smoke free! The people are very excited about the stoves and grateful to those who made it possible for them to have them.

We talked to people who received a new roof for their houses. The lamina (roofing material) **was also purchased with funds from our fish fry** and handed out by students from John Carroll in June of 2010. The new roofs kept people dry during the rainy season of 2011 which was the worst ever.

Several people from our first mission team worked with people from St. Dominic and St. Barnabas parishes to help start an **agricultural project** that involves about 35 families. They are learning and employing sustainable farming methods, soil improvement, crop diversification, erosion prevention, and ir-

rigation during the dry season. Our team visited the farm and it was very impressive to see how far they have come in just one year.

With funds from our **Hope Fund** we are helping to **build a chapel** in one of the remote communities. We also were able to distribute **beans** to some of the poorest families. The children were thrilled with the **jig-saw puzzles** we brought that were donated by the St. John Neumann PSR children.

Some members of our mission team helped in the Santo Domingo parish clinic. They assisted the doctor, helped organize the pharmacy, and gave talks about preventative health care. The doctor at the clinic was grateful for the **medicines** we brought, and the dentist was happy with the more than **200 toothbrushes donated by Strongsville area dentists.** In the future we hope to assist the clinic in the purchase of a portable ultrasound machine, a dental x-ray machine and some additional dental instruments.

Thank you to everyone who prayed that our trip would be a success, and thanks for all the ways SJN parishioners have reached out to our brothers and sisters in Chiltiupan, especially through our "Hope Fund" and Fish Fry For The Needy. This year's Fish Fry For the Needy is Fri., March 30.



After making necklaces, parishioners joined the altar servers in a water balloon contest.



Workers mixed cement by hand to lay the foundation for a new chapel at Cuervo Arriba, near Chiltiupan. Donations from St. John Neumann are helping fund the construction of the chapel.



With the new stove, Maria Victoria's home is smoke-free and her children are no longer at risk of being burned.



For 10 minutes a day, a member of the farm cooperative must manually aerate the water in a new tilapia pond.



A baker balances a basket of breads and pastries on her head as she walks door-to-door selling her goods. Salvadorans transport many things on their heads, including bowls of corn to be milled and even bags of stones used to build the foundation of a chapel.



(left) St. John Neumann parishioners led a craft activity with altar servers in Chiltiupan. During our visit, the children made beaded necklaces with their names.

Images from the missions



Ignatius students in Dominican Republic



(above) Chiltiupan residents participating in the sustainable agriculture project demonstrate how they mix compost with soil prior to planting seeds under irrigation hoses.



COAR village in El Salvador



A traditional Salvadoran stove is a raised platform or table on which a wood fire is built. Because the rainy season lasts six months a year, the stoves are inside the house and regularly fill the house with smoke. Emphysema, COPD and eye problems are common..

Life Teen mission trips

by Rory Dayton

It's hard to do justice on paper to the people I came into contact with on my mission trip to the Dominican Republic. Sure, the food was amazing and the service (digging 15 foot-deep latrine holes) we gave to the people of *Rancho de los Plantanos*, a small mountain village, was an important part of the trip, but really none of that mattered when compared to the relationships that were formed between our group of ten Ignatius men and the beautiful people of the "DR."

Over the days that were to come, I met the most wonderful people I have ever met – kind, smiling, thankful, encouraging, happy people. We came to know these people and they came to know us.

by Rachel Piepsny

This past summer I was blessed with the opportunity to travel to El Salvador on a mission trip with twelve members from my senior class of Padua Franciscan High School. Our destination was Comunidad Oscar Arnulfo Romero, or COAR, which serves as both a school for six hundred underprivileged children in Zaragoza and the surrounding cities, and as a children's home

for eighty children that cannot go home due to various reasons, ranging from extreme poverty to abuse to being true orphans. Our mission trip's main focus was education; we taught English to COAR's students, whose ages range from four to nineteen years old. Additionally, we made it our goal to build relationships with the children who

called COAR home through crafts, songs, dances, games, dinner parties, and every other way we possibly could.

I learned that giving of yourself is what counts, even when all of the odds are against you. Because of this, my faith grew, as did my love for the people of El Salvador. I have been forever changed.

See and read more about the Life Teens' missions at <http://dbhas.info/2011mission>

Holy hour of prayer for unemployed held on Ash Wednesday

Over the past several months, parishioners have come together for a holy hour of prayer focused on special topics or needs, such as praying for college students as they went off to school in the fall. Pastor Fr. Bob Kraig often mentions the holy hours in his homilies, saying how nice it is to see parishioners praying for one another.

The most recent parish holy hour of prayer was on Ash Wednesday, at which time many parishioners came to pray for the unemployed and underemployed. It was gratifying to see the number of persons who began the Lenten season in prayer for those who are out of work and for their families.

If you have wondered how you can help the unemployed, prayer is always needed and always welcome.

Third anniversary for St. John Neumann Job Network

Next month the St. John Neumann Job Network (SJN²) marks its third anniversary. Started during the depths of the Great Recession, the group continues to add participants, even as some job seekers land new positions, and currently has 240 members.

Participants receive information via email about dozens of open positions, many of which are in or near Strongsville. Network contacts, alumni and helpful parishioners are among those who forward job leads to members. In addition to job leads, members may attend monthly meetings, at which they share successes and challenges, help one another with problem-solving, practice their public speaking skills and learn about current job search techniques.

Periodically, guest speakers visit to participate in panel discussions or present special topics, such as developing one's personal brand or situational interviewing.

Whether you are currently in career transition, interested in forwarding job leads or just curious about this parish ministry, you are invited to attend. Meetings are held 7:30-8:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of the month. The next meeting is scheduled for March 21 in the Gathering Room.

For more information contact Joe Wollet at 440.846.8080 or jwollet@gmail.com.

What did SJN's Social Concerns do in 2011?

We fed between 150 and 180 men women and children at **St. Pat's** on March 30, June 29, August 31, and November 30.

We took dinner to **Procop House** on the first and third Monday of each month and shared it with the 20 or so men who live there.

We sold **Fair Trade Coffee**, Tea, and Chocolate after the Masses on the first Sunday of each month.

Kids at Sts. Joseph and John's collected **toiletries** for men's and women's homeless shelters.

We collected food for the **Strongsville Food Bank** and the **St. Boniface Food Bank** in March, June, September, and November.

We collected **pop tabs** for Ronald McDonald House in March, June, and September.

We cooked and served breakfast to about 100 people at the **Catholic Worker Storefront** in March, July, September, and December.

We collected baby bottles filled with loose change for the **Cleveland Pregnancy Center**.

We cooked and served dinner at **Ronald McDonald House** in May.

We provided school supplies for hundreds of children both in Strongsville and in Cleveland through the St. Vincent de Paul **Back to School Drive**.

\$1500 was raised for **Maggie's Place** from the **Women's Luncheon**.

249 families were given Thanksgiving dinners through our **Thanksgiving Dinner Drive**.

Over 1000 gifts were given at Christmas through our **Giving Tree**.

Over **100 winter coats** as well as household goods were provided to Migration and Refugee Services.

Hundreds of parishioners provided service to over 30 different agencies on our **Day of Hope**.

(See photos below from our Day of Hope)

Why should we be concerned with Social Concerns?

When the Son of Man comes as King and all the angels with him, he will sit on his royal throne, and the people of all nations will be gathered before him. Then he will divide them into two groups, just as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the righteous people at his right and the others at his left. Then the King will say to the people at his right, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.' The righteous will then answer him, 'When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brother of mine, you did it for me!' Matthew 25: 31 – 40

The above passage from St. Matthew's gospel is familiar to most of us. But how often have we read it thoughtfully and prayerfully? If we do, the answer to why we should all become involved in the social concerns efforts of our parish should be obvious. The hungry, the naked, the homeless, the sick, the imprisoned, the lonely are all around us today, just as they were present to the people in Jesus' day. But like the people of Jesus' time we often get so wrapped up in the busyness of our lives that we do not see them. Would we continue to ignore those in need if we really believed that whatever we do for any one of them we do for Jesus?

This does not mean we should become involved in Social Concerns out of guilt. We should become involved out of love. The best part of service and outreach is the joy that comes from helping others. Jesus loves us so much that when we reach out anyone in need he rewards us with joy and happiness and makes us want to do more.

Then why don't more people become involved? The biggest excuse is "I don't have time." But is that a valid reason? Read verses 41 – 46 of Matthew 25 and see if you still can say you don't have time.

Some will say they don't know what they can do. They are too young, too old, travel too much, have young kids, don't think their efforts are wanted, or someone else will do it. I say to you, everyone is needed and wanted. Become involved; try it – you'll like it.

When you go grocery shopping next time, pick up a few extra items for our food drive. Get your kids to help you decide what to buy. If you travel out of town on business, bring home the soap, shampoo, and lotion from your motel room (after all, you paid for them) and donate them for our "goodie bags" for the homeless. If you are cleaning out your house or buying new furniture, donate usable kitchen items, towels, sheets, or dishes to the refugees who are helped by Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services. ("I was a stranger and you welcomed me.") If you have used furniture that is still in good condition, donate it to the Cleveland Furniture Bank rather than putting it on your curb.

Perhaps you can help cook our meal for the poor at St. Pat's or go down to St. Pat's and help serve. ("I was hungry and you fed me.") Cooking or serving doesn't fit into your schedule? Maybe you can bake cookies. If you have some time on a Monday evening,

you could join one of the teams that take dinner to Procop House and eat with the men who live there. You'll be surprised at how much fun it is. If you are free on weekends, you might like to cook or serve one of our breakfasts at the Catholic Worker Storefront. Soon we will be asking for people to cook a healthy breakfast at 2100 Lakeside, the men's homeless shelter. I guarantee that your image of a homeless person will change when you serve these men. Or you might like to help provide a meal at Ronald McDonald House for families of children who are hospitalized. You will be inspired by the courage and the faith of the people you meet.

An easy but significant way you can help others is to purchase Fair Trade Coffee. When you do, be sure to pick up a brochure and read about how Fair Trade products help indigent people around the world. You can also take time to educate yourself about other groups in need. By attending the SJN Quarterly Social Concerns meeting you will hear speakers about some of the issues that contribute to poverty and need. Recently we heard from a refugee from Sudan and we learned about the fear that penetrates the lives of undocumented people who can at any time be stopped by the Border Patrol and ultimately sent back to Latin America. Rather than just a political issue, the undocumented person becomes a real person who only wants to support and be with his family. ("Whatever you did for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me!")

It could be that the way you can become involved in SJN Social Concerns is through advocacy. This means educating yourself about the issues and speaking out in support of the poor and the marginalized. Think about these things in the light of the above passage from St. Matthew. Let the words of the Gospel guide you in your voting and in your actions at work.

Perhaps you can do nothing more at this time in your life than pray. Yet prayer is probably the most important thing any of us can do. Consider spending an hour in our chapel praying for all the people we reach out to through Social Concerns. We are all called to reflect on the words of Jesus and do what we can. ("Whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.")



2011



Dates to remember

February

- 20 Procop House 5:15 p.m.
- 29 St. Pat's meal 2:00 p.m. cook at SJN. 5:15 p.m. serve at St. Pats

March

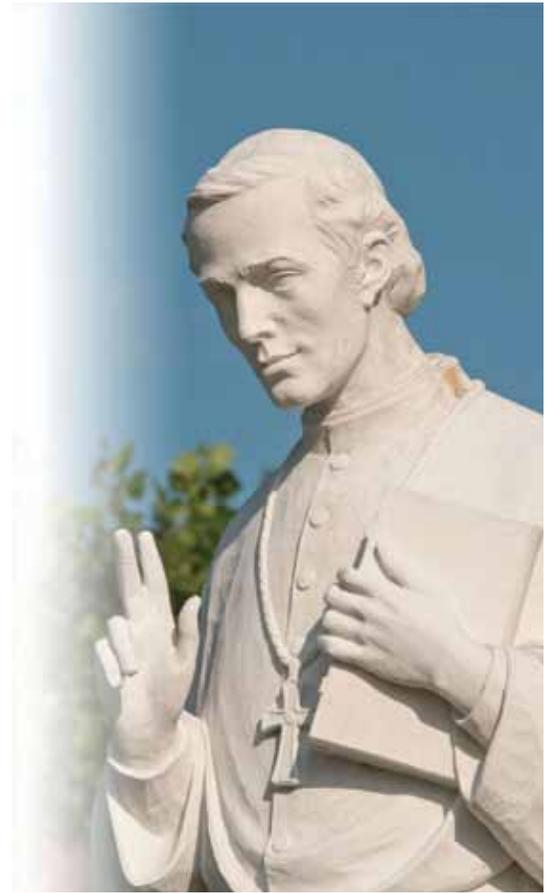
- 3/4 Fair Trade coffee sold after all masses
- 17/18 Food Drive. Pop tabs also collected.
- 19 Procop House 5:15 p,m,
- 21 SJN Job Network 7:30 p.m.
- 24 Cook breakfast for Catholic Worker Storefront 1:00 p.m. at SJN
- 25 Serve breakfast at Catholic Worker Storefront 8:30 a.m.
- 31 Fair Trade coffee sold after all masses

April

- 1 Fair Trade coffee sold after all masses
- 18 SJN Job Network 7:30 p.m.
- 26 Social Concerns quarterly meeting w/speaker 7:30 p.m.
- 28/29 Life Teen Cardboard Campout

May

- 5/6 Fair Trade coffee sold after all masses
- 7 Procop House 5:15 p.m.
- 16 SJN Job Network 7:30 p.m.
- 21 Procop House 5:15 p.m.
- 30 St. Pat's meal 2:00 p.m. cook at SJN. 5:15 p.m. serve at St. Pat's



Evening of Hope

