

VINCENTIAN FAMILY – LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

Sixty members of the Vincentian Family celebrated the 350th anniversary of the death of St. Vincent and St. Louise on August 7, 2010 at St. Ann's parish in North Little Rock, AR. The planning committee composed of Fr. Tom Stehlik, CM, Sandy DeCoursey, Kristy Eanes, and Guillermo Bruzatori, was led by Sr. Maria Liebeck, DC. An exciting day was planned for us. The hall was decorated with brightly colored tables and centerpieces depicting the corporal works of mercy performed by Vincentians. Saints Louise and Vincent, Elizabeth Ann and Catherine together with Blessed Rosalie and Blessed Frédéric, were depicted on large banners. We began the day over coffee, rolls and fruit, while a band composed of Lay Vincentian Missioneros played for us. Soon three women began dancing around the room in a line and gradually almost everyone who was able joined in clapping and greeting each other as we snaked around the tables. It was a great icebreaker!

At 9:30AM we began with a prayer, followed by time for each group to share about their group and what they are doing for the poor. Fr. Tom Stehlik, CM began by sharing a brief history of the founding of the Congregation of the Mission, leading up to today with countries and numbers mentioned. Sr. Maria Liebeck, DC followed with a brief history of the founding of the Daughters of Charity, her own vocation story and facts about Daughters of Charity all over the world. Then each of the seven Daughters of Charity from Little Rock, Gould and Lake Providence were introduced. Sr. Joan Pytlik, DC gave a brief history of the origins of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and where the Conferences are located in Arkansas. Kristy Eanes, President of the Ladies of Charity of AR, a Diocesan group, shared the many projects being done for the poor. They included baking cookies for the homeless, Christmas layettes for Birthright, Art Camp for children of parents who are incarcerated or homeless, and a garden project at St. Joseph's, a former orphanage, which provides food for Christopher Homes and Helping Hand. Sam Paladino, the leader of the Lay Vincentian Missioneros gave a brief history of how they got started. He said an important part of their spirit comes from weekly meetings for prayer and sharing. Several retreats have been held and more are planned for the future for both men and women. Right now they seem to be on fire to evangelize.

At noon we celebrated the Eucharist with Fr. Tom Stehlik, CM presiding at St. Ann's Church and Deacon Arnoldo Hernandez, CM preaching on the Beatitudes. A delicious fajita lunch was catered afterwards by a restaurant run by a Lay Vincentian Missionero. After lunch Sr. Mary Lou Stubbs, DC led us in a special prayer. A video depicting Vincentian Family members serving the poor was shown. Guest speakers spoke on Love in Action and the day was wrapped up. All went home on a "high" and feeling very connected to the Vincentian Family!

Sister Doris Moore, DC