

The Mission

Graduate Says “Thanks” to Prison Ministry Program



CCDA file photo

Catherine was able to complete her college course work in prison and receive her degree.

Catherine was depressed, unmotivated, lonely, and behind bars when she decided to sign up for an inter-faith retreat at a Correctional Center for Women in Virginia, where she was serving time for a felony conviction.

After the three-day retreat, called KAIROS, Catherine found that her life was forever changed for the better. She felt forgiven by God and regained enough self-worth to return to her studies while still incarcerated.

Catherine sent a thank-you letter to Sr. Connie Parcasio, her retreat leader and the director of Catholic Charities’ prison ministry program, and explained, “You showed me that it doesn’t matter where I come from or what I call myself. I am a child of God, and he loves me no matter what.”

In the letter, Catherine added, “I have a lot of work to do on myself, but I know now

that I’ve got all the help I need. Never before would I use the word ‘joy’ in reference to myself. Now, for the first time, I have joy, a joyful soul, and a full heart. I know now that God wants me to forgive myself and, for the first time, I believe that I can.”

She reflected, “I am human and fall as often as not, but I ask for forgiveness and try again.”

Sr. Connie received another letter some time later in which Catherine reported that she had completed her course work while still in prison and had

received her college degree. She enclosed her graduation photo.

The mission of the prison ministry program is, says Sr. Connie, “to be present to prisoners with love, to work along side of them in their everyday isolation and rejection, to help them see the good in themselves, to help them understand their insecurities, and to help them know the love of Christ.”

For information about volunteering to assist with the prison ministry program, please call Sr. Connie Parcasio, SNDS, at 703-841-3832.

On the Path to Citizenship

Students in Hogar Hispano’s “Citizenship Now” class, which teaches English and subject matter related to the U.S. citizenship test, recently took a field trip to see firsthand some of the historic sites mentioned in their textbooks.

The students were learning about U.S. history and government and answering 100 standard civics questions from USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services). Students were also preparing for the citizenship English exam through daily dictations and review of language in the citizenship application.

Hogar Hispano, Catholic Charities’ immigrant services



CCDA file photo

Hogar Hispano students visit the U.S. Capitol.

program, also runs a citizenship workshop with partner agencies every eight weeks at the Arlington Mills Community Center in Arlington. Applicants come with their documents and receive assistance in filling out the 10-page Form N-400 for submission to USCIS. For more information, call 703-534-9805, ext. 222 or 237.



Stephen Luteran

FROM THE DESK OF

Stephen Luteran

Pope Benedict XVI's recently published encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est (God Is Love)*, puts service to the poor and love of neighbor on the same level as receiving the sacraments and proclaiming the Word. This is wonderful news for those of us who commit our lives to serving others.

The Holy Father reminds us that "Jesus identifies himself with those in need, with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the

naked, the sick, and those in prison." Pope Benedict observes that the poor and Jesus essentially become one so that "whatever we do to the least of our brothers and sisters, we do to Jesus."

We at Catholic Charities welcome this new encyclical that calls upon us to give equal attention to the sacraments, the Word, and service. Assisting the poor is not an option; it is a requirement of living our faith to the fullest.

Next year, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington will be celebrating 60 years of ser-

vice to the poor and vulnerable in our diocese. We are planning some exciting events and hope that you will join us in prayerful reflection and celebration throughout the coming year.

As we prepare for our 60th anniversary, let us reflect more deeply on *Deus Caritas Est*.

Stephen Luteran, M.S.W., L.C.S.W.
Executive Director
Catholic Charities
of the Diocese of Arlington

Parish Liaison Network Focuses on the Gospel Message

The topic of "Bound by Convention or Freed by Conviction" attracted more than 70 people to the May 12 semi-annual gathering of Catholic Charities' Parish Liaison Network (PLN), held at St. Mary of Sorrows in Fairfax. Anne Murphy, program director of Catholic Charities' parish social ministry, welcomed PLN representatives, JustFaith participants, and diocesan colleagues.

Fr. Kevin Nadolski, director of vocations for the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, asked attendees to think about how they are bound by convention but could be freed by conviction as members of a struggling Church.

"Convention," he said, "is sometimes equated with the status quo. We accept social conventions as 'that's the way it has been and that's the way that it shall always be.' But the call of the Gospel has changed all of that." Nadolski talked about "the conviction of our baptism" and the call "to respect the inherent dignity of all because we are all members of God's family."

Jeff Caruso, director of the Virginia Catholic Conference, said, "We are called by God and the Church to give preferential attention to the poorest and most vulnerable." He said, "We all have a right to participate in the



Fr. Kevin Nadolski, Anne Murphy, and Jeff Caruso attend the PLN gathering.

Photo by Ray Finney

political process and, indeed, a duty to be a part of it," adding that "the Virginia Catholic Conference gives us the ability to become involved meaningfully in it in order to bring our faith to bear on the political process."

Murphy said, "The ultimate goal for both the JustFaith program and the Parish Liaison Network program is the same—to enrich the hearts of the faithful and expand their capacity for loving more widely and more deeply, as modeled for us by Jesus Christ. This is a season for planting seeds, seeds of faith and seeds of love." She encouraged attendees to use the lens of the Church's teachings to view the world and to take action to make it a better place for all.

For information on the PLN, please call 703-841-3831.

Golf Classic Marks 14th Year

Photo by Jeanne Spaeth



Fr. Gerry Creedon concentrates.

One hundred and twenty players participated in the 2006 Catholic Charities Classic at Belle Haven Country Club in Alexandria on June 19. Catholic Charities' Executive Director Stephen Luteran thanked sponsors, golfers, and the Golf Committee, chaired by Brian Roberts and Donna Weyh Roberts.

Net proceeds of \$36,000 were raised to support Catholic Charities' programs. Generous support came from these sponsors:

- BB&T (tournament sponsor)
- Bill Page Honda (gold sponsor)
- Buck & Associates (silver sponsor)
- Cox Business Services (gold sponsor)
- Croix Connect (golf shirt sponsor)
- Neil Goetzman (silver sponsor)
- Knights of Columbus—Mt. Vernon Council (two silver sponsorships)
- Levick Strategic Communications (silver sponsor)

Working for the Church

Photo by Jeanne Spaeth



Fr. Mark Mealey

“View your work for the Church as a mission, not a job,” urged Fr. Mark Mealey, OSFS, during his presentation to diocesan staff on April 12. As the featured speaker at the Chancery's brown bag lunch series, Fr. Mealey, Vicar General for Administration, said that working for the Church should be an “act of love” and “our mission should be to do the work of God” and “to proclaim the love and presence of Christ to all.” Fr. Mealey, an ex-officio member of Catholic Charities' Board of Directors, spoke of early Christians' setting the example of being “other-centered.”

- M3COM (gold sponsor)
- Mercer Human Resource Consulting (silver sponsor)
- Murphy Funeral Home (dinner sponsor)
- Ourisman Automotive of Virginia (silver sponsor)
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (reception sponsor)
- Sacred Heart Church (goody bag sponsor)
- St. John the Apostle Church (lunch sponsor)
- Security One Bank (silver sponsor)
- SunTrust (two silver sponsorships)
- Talant (silver sponsor)
- St. Thomas a Becket Church (beverage cart sponsor)
- Weyh Roberts & Associates (design and printing).

Wish List

Catholic Charities needs:

- **Used cars in working condition (call 703-841-2531)**
- **Volunteers to assist with the car ministry program (call 703-841-2531)**
- **Certified Red Cross CPR instructor to teach foster parents about CPR for infants/children (call 703-425-0100)**
- **Childbirth instructor and labor coach who speaks Spanish (call 703-425-0100)**

News in Brief

- St. Mary's Conference of Old Town Alexandria once again kindly presented Catholic Charities with large donations: a \$20,000 check for St. Martin de Porres Senior Center and a \$20,000 check for Christ House in Fiscal Year 2006.
- Exxon Mobil presented Catholic Charities with a generous check of \$21,208 as part of its 2005 Employee's Favorite Charity Campaign. It also provided a grant of \$2,000 to fund an intern during the summer of 2006 to assist the English as a Second Language (ESL) program at Hogar Hispano.
- Catholic Charities thankfully

received \$33,810.61 from the 2005 Fannie Mae Foundation's “Help the Homeless” Walkathon. Catholic Charities' Emergency Assistance/Homeless Prevention (listed under the code name CCEAP) was one of the programs that walkers could designate as the recipient of their contributions.

- Employees of Calvert Jones, Inc., of Alexandria gave a generous donation of \$2,435 to Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington to assist Hurricane Katrina evacuees.
- Students of Bishop O'Connell High School delivered 9,400 cans of chunky soup to Christ House following the students' charitable food drive, a long-standing

tradition that has assisted Catholic Charities.

- Confirmandi of St. Thomas More Cathedral's Religious Education made a charitable donation of \$300 to Catholic Charities.
- The Northern Virginia Community Foundation has kindly presented a \$1,500 grant to Hogar Hispano to support its ESL classes during Fiscal Year 2006.
- The Baby Needs Closet at Catholic Charities' Fredericksburg District Office received much-appreciated support from the Knights of Columbus of St. Jude Mission Church and the Ladies' Auxiliary of St. Patrick Church. The Knights provided shelving for the closet, and the Auxiliary provided beautiful baby afghans and monetary donations.
- As part of the service requirements of his Eagle Scout Badge, Scott Presler of Boy Scout Troop No. 50 at Holy Spirit Catholic Church recently organized a food drive and collected more than 3,000 parcels of nonperishable food items for Christ House's Emergency Assistance Program.
- Catholic Charities was pleased to receive a \$2,000 grant from Provident Bank to support Hogar Hispano's ESL program during FY2007.

Hunger Awareness Day Observed at Christ House

Nearly fifty poor, hungry individuals enjoyed dinner at Catholic Charities' Christ House in Alexandria on June 6, National Hunger Awareness Day. Christ House's evening meal program serves more than 18,000 meals annually and is operated by staff and volunteers.

Stephen Luteran, Catholic Charities' executive director, welcomed a new group of volunteers from Provident Bank on June 6 and said, "We are very pleased that executives of Provident Bank have agreed to prepare and serve a dinner for the hungry one evening a month. We welcome you to the Christ House family."

Other volunteers helping at Christ House include groups from Holy Spirit parish, Blessed Sacrament parish, Good Shepherd parish, St. Paul Chung parish, St. Lawrence parish, St. James parish, St. Anthony parish, St. John the Beloved parish, St. Mark parish, Our Lady of Good Counsel parish, St. Thomas More parish, St.



Photo by Ray Plisney

Robert Haley, Richard Steele, and David Goldman (left to right) of Provident Bank prepare a dinner for the hungry.

Philip parish, Church of the Nativity parish, St. Thomas a Becket parish, St. Joseph parish in Alexandria, St. Catherine of Siena parish, St. Louis parish, St. Rita parish, St. Mary parish in Alexandria, Queen of Apostles' Spanish group, Secular Franciscans, Fort Belvoir, Prime Time Singles, Trinity United Methodist Church, St. Paul Episcopal Church, American Association of University Women, Old Presbyterian Meeting House, Immanuel on the Hill, Northern Virginia Catholic Community, Friends of Christ House, and the Knights of Columbus (from Fairfax, Vienna, and Cathedral of St. Thomas More). To volunteer, call 703-549-8644.

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