

## Stories of Service in Our Diocese



*“What you did to one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”*

We all know that inspiring line from the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew’s gospel.

**Would you like to know how people**

**in our diocese are serving the “least”?** At the September 2010 diocesan Catholic Life Conference, panelists at the diocesan Commission for Life & Justice workshop described just that.

**Tom Forr**, representing the Citizens Concerned for Human Life (CCHL), recounted his journey into the pro-life movement and spoke of CCHL’s work, including organizing buses to the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C.

**Pastor Jim Balzano** of Pleasant Valley Assembly of God told the amazing story of his congregation’s concern for the city of Altoona. Although their church is in a nice area of the city, this congregation adopted a less fortunate neighborhood across town. Their “Nehemiah Project” included raising 1.3 million dollars to remodel a condemned building which now offers food and clothing ministries, after-school programs with a state of the art computer lab, and other services. Why do all this? Simply because loving God means loving the neighbor.

**Paula Raynar**, a counselor at Catholic Charities in Bellefonte, spoke about joining a volunteer group which visits prisoners each month to share faith and the gospel. However, seeing additional needs of the prisoners, she now offers services through Catholic Charities to those who are released. These people, too, are the “least” of whom our Lord speaks.

**Alice Emanuel** of the St. Vincent DePaul Society informed us of the quiet, behind the scenes work of this organization, now present in many parishes in our diocese, in visiting and serving those of limited income. She recounted the Society’s humble beginnings and her own involvement – all a response to being touched personally by God’s goodness.

**Sr. Kate O’Neil**, from Most Holy Trinity Parish in Huntingdon, described her parish’s involvement in the town’s Soup Kitchen. This ecumenical initiative offers a nutritious, attractive meal each week. Volunteers say that more important than the food is the building of relationships with the dinner guests. We are all God’s people.

**Most Holy Trinity** also twins with a parish in Haiti. Fr. David Arseneault described visits between the two parishes, and the sharing of faith as well as monetary help. Each week when Huntingdon parishioners purchase bottled water after Mass, they are reminded of their Haitian brothers and sisters because proceeds go to a fund to buy well drilling equipment for them.

Hearing those stories at the workshop profoundly inspired and consoled all present. In these ways and so many others we in this diocesan Household love God by serving the “least of his brothers.”



*The Commission would like to hear from you – let us know what life and justice ministries are happening in your parish or area. Email us at [lifeandjustice@dioceseaj.org](mailto:lifeandjustice@dioceseaj.org).*