

This week I want to give a little different homily. It's more of an explanation of a change starting here at Holy Family. On the first weekend of every month we take up a collection for the St. Vincent de Paul Society. There are envelopes in your packets for this. You have been very generous in your support, and on average you give about \$120,000 a year to SVdP. In fact, the Society has been able to save up a significant savings account from this collection.

In light of that, and since there some other needs that could use our funding, going forward we are going to restructure our monthly second collection. St. Vincent de Paul will still get a good chunk of the funds. But we have also committed to donate as a parish \$50,000 per year to the New Bethlehem Day Center. For those of you who are new, the NBDC is a new Day Center for homeless families just a couple blocks north of us. Holy Family has been very instrumental in creating the Day Center. Non-Profits of that kind need to fundraise, but they also need some annual revenue they can count on. Hence our commitment.

The exciting news is that the Day Center is going to expand into a full-time, full-service, around the clock homeless shelter in the not-too-distant future. The City of Kirkland has received some land from Salthouse to build the building, so by the time the NBDC's three-year lease is up – and our commitment of \$50,000 per year is met – we might be looking at a whole new picture in ministering to the homeless. But for now that \$50,000 will come out of the second collection.

In addition to the New Bethlehem contribution we will also use \$10,000 per year from the second collection for our parish out-reach program. You may not realize that the St. Vincent de Paul Society has stringent by-laws concerning its activities. The Society can only help those people living in the parish boundaries – southern Kirkland and western Redmond. They are great at that, but it leaves many people who come to our parish seeking help literally out in the cold. But the parish itself – often in the person of Andrea Ligget our out-reach

minister – can help such people. Almost every week she gives what aid we can to those who call or show up on our doorstep.

Therefore, monthly envelopes in your packets will now look different than in the past. There will now be three symbols on them representing the three destinations for the contributions – St. Vincent de Paul, New Bethlehem, Parish Out-reach. [hold up an envelope]

Just to be clear, all funds gathered from the second collection above and beyond the \$50,00 for New Bethlehem and the \$10,000 for out-reach, will still go to the SVdP. If the collection remains at about \$120,000 per year that would be \$60,000. That would seem to be cutting SVdP resources in half. But as I said SVdP has a good savings account to draw from for these next years. And I have spoken with the leadership of SVdP and it supports the proposal. If the savings are drawn down too far and vital ministries of SVdP are threatened, we can re-visit the topic and percentages.

But my real hope is that we can actually grow the collection so nobody loses funds. This is the first weekend of Lent. We're going out into the desert. We're tempted by the Devil to worship our wealth. But one of the classic Lenten practices is almsgiving – giving to those in need. I know that many of you already give to the second collection. Our St. Vincent de Paul Society can do incredible things working with your gifts precisely because so many in the parish contribute. But I ask that every family in the parish consider giving at least a bit each month, above and beyond your parish tithe, to this collection. And don't forget those of you working at certain companies can designate matching funds for this. I have a confession to make. Up to now I haven't given in a regular way to the SVdP collection. But one of my Lenten resolutions this year is to begin giving monthly. Perhaps that could one of your resolutions as well.

Many of us have a vague feeling that we should give more to the poor, but we don't know how to do it effectively and efficiently. This

three-pronged collection is the perfect way to do that. I know from personally working with the people in all three ministries that the money you give to this really does collection go to people in your own community who are hungry, cold, without shelter, or needing the funds to keep the lights and water on. And the people in SVdP, NBDC and the parish distributing the funds know what they're doing. You can trust them to make compassionate, but smart decisions with our contributions.

But there is an even deeper ask here. The St. Vincent de Paul Society always needs more members. They will have a table in the narthex/café after mass. What if you went and talked with them about how you could personally help in the satisfying, vital, sometimes, frankly, frustrating, ministry of working with the poor? Many of you are already helping at the New Bethlehem Center. Others haven't found the right place to volunteer yet. Either way, you might find a calling as a

member of St. Vincent de Paul. Now that would be a true Lenten gift of time as well as treasure.

My hope is that as we grow spiritually as a parish we will increase our second collection by getting new participants so that nobody loses: that we can fund the New Bethlehem Center as well as more parish out-reach without cutting the budget elsewhere. I'm confident enough in the Holy Spirit, and in you, to expect that will happen.