

Stories of Hope: Vincentian Family Gathering

by S. Alice Mailman

Sisters Alice Mailman, Elaine Biollo and Katie Hamm attended the Vincentian Family Gathering in New Orleans in April. The theme for this years' gathering was Solidarity in Action. (Also see S. Elaine's article, "A Night to Remember"). Here are a few stories of hope from the gathering.

1. Take The Parish To The People: A Lesson From Katrina

Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath displaced the people of the church of Saint Peter Claver in Treme, LA – physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually.

The church leadership developed a “let’s go out” attitude. Their worship or liturgy, the work of the people, was to do what needed to be done. Their ministry focused on finding, supporting and uniting the people. The words of Vatican II, “Church as the people of God”, became a reality in the lives of this church’s leadership and membership. Today the people of St Peter Claver have returned in full force, a stronger and more compassionate parish according to their pastor Father Michael Jacques, SSE.

2. Buildings Are Made For People (Mk 27, adapted)

Church To Be Closed. Saint Cecilia’s Church in the Bywater section of New Orleans, LA, was closed to formal liturgical worship but it was transformed to another type of Holy Ground to house a Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE).

PACE is a comprehensive health program helping frail elders to stay in their homes. Daily participants come to socialize and have their health care needs met in one location. “Living in the Lord’s Temple all the days of my life,” Ps 21 takes on new meaning as one walks this facility. There is reverence and respect for each person that is inspiring.

3. Be Gone – What Touched My Vincentian Heart?

The overall feeling that stays with me from this experience is the need to pray for an end to the many forms of injustice. Clarence Williams, CPPS in his book Racial Sobriety, speaks of the call of the disciples: it is to see that the prayer of Jesus is answered. What is that prayer? “That all may be one ... that all may be sisters and brothers”.

And so I pray:

Racism – Be Gone, AMEN.

Gender inequality – Be Gone, AMEN.

Economic inequality – Be Gone, AMEN.

Religious privilege - Be Gone, AMEN.

You can add your own prayer for healing and be part of all who participated in “Solidarity in Action”! Thanks to our Congregation for the experience.