

Face of the Poor

A large part of being a Salvatorian is giving a face to the poor and people marginalized in any way. As vicar of social concerns for the Diocese of Youngstown, Ohio, Salvatorian Fr. David Bergner SDS has been tasked with the leadership responsibility for Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). Youngstown's Catholic Charities saw almost 35,000 people last year and helped address their basic needs for food, shelter, and clothing. The diocesan-wide CRS campaign provides invaluable financial assistance to refugees in the Middle East. CCHD supports a values-based community organization which is working for social change in the greater Youngstown area. However, outreach to the vulnerable doesn't stop here.

Youngstown has become the incredible shrinking city with a high poverty rate! It's not surprising to find a Salvatorian in Youngstown among those in need.

The Youngstown community is a welcoming community because of its recent immigrant history. Fr. Dave saw the shared experience of the people as an asset on which to draw. Through his efforts, Bishop George V. Murry and the Catholic community are collaborating with elected officials, Youngstown State University and the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation to help re-build the City. They plan to do this in three ways: to resettle new immigrants from Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; to establish a credit union that makes loans available to small businesses and creates jobs; and to build affordable new housing in old neighborhoods that now form a wasteland of empty, trash-filled lots.

"Wherever there are people in need, you will find Salvatorians," said Fr. Dave. "You will also find Salvatorians seeking to fulfill the mandate of Pope Francis to evangelize, which he states simply 'to make the Kingdom of God present in our world' (The Joy of the Gospel), especially wherever the poor are to be found."

[Photo]



[Caption] (l-r) Fr. Dave Bergner SDS with Kathleen Rothman, Secretary at St. Vincent de Paul and Fr. Ed Noga, pastor of St. Patrick's in Youngstown, touch base in the dining hall.



[Caption]

Fr. Ed and Fr. Dave say Mass at the dining hall.