

How you can help Catholic Charities 10

St. Nicholas Partners bring holiday cheer. 12

CATHOLIC CHARITIES Connections

SUPPLEMENT TO ARKANSAS CATHOLIC • CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF ARKANSAS • P.O. BOX 7565 • LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72217 • NOVEMBER 27, 2010

BRIEFS

■ **GRANT:** The Supporting Survivors Program for immigration services received a \$10,000 grant from the Women's Foundation of Arkansas Oct. 14. The program will provide guidance for victims of violence as they begin to move forward with their lives. Additional funding is being sought to provide practical assistance, such as bus passes and employment preparation.

■ **DENTAL KITS:** Westside Free Medical Clinic wants to provide dental kits to all patients in the coming year. Youth groups and Scouts looking for a project are urged to consider this important preventative focus. Students would be responsible for collecting and bagging toothbrushes, dental floss and toothpaste and then delivering it to the clinic for distribution. Contact Karen DiPippa at (501) 664-0340, ext. 356 to discuss the dental kits.

■ **ASSISTANCE:** Catholic Charities of Arkansas provides about \$20,000 a year to assist people in Arkansas with acute needs. The funds come from grants, donations and the Rice Bowl collection. There are two basic ways these funds are distributed.

One distribution is through the Helping Hand organization, which works with the parishes in the Little Rock area. Monthly they receive \$500 to help approximately 111 people with food and clothing. The second way is the emergency assistance funds available to support parishes, diocesan departments/programs and collaborating organizations who are working with people in acute need.

An important part of sharing through organizations is to assure that the people helped have a relationship with a church or group that cares for them and that it is supporting them with more than a little bit of emergency cash.

Requests for emergency assistance can be made by contacting the Parish Social Ministries office by phone or by e-mail and will be followed up by a phone conversation to determine how we can best help. A negotiable portion of the needed funds are provided as a match to the organization's funds and checks are written to the organization.

■ **NEW EMPLOYEES:** Two new employees have joined Catholic Charities of Arkansas. Fatima Orozco is the office manager for the Little Rock immigration office. A recent graduate from Hendrix College, Orozco offers a welcoming presence to both staff and clients. Born in Brownsville, Texas, and raised in Matamoros, she speaks

See BRIEFS page 10

Abuse victims no longer alone

Crime Victims Services Unit gives sustaining hope for victims

Stories like Maria's (a compilation of immigrant victim testimonies from the Crime Victims Services Unit in Little Rock, at right below the photo) play out every day across Arkansas.

No one should live with the abuse, degradation and suffering that the immigrant victims served by the Crime Victims Services Unit encounter. We see victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and other violent crimes, most often committed by those who claim to love them the most, including those whom the Scriptures place special emphasis on, the relationships between husbands and wives — "Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them." (Col. 3:19). The Church leaves no room for excusing a husband's violent and abusive behavior toward his wife, nor for the proposition that a wife is obligated to accept her husband's abuse; her true responsibility is to ensure safety for herself and her children.

The Crime Victims Services Unit of Catholic Immigration Services in Little Rock works to end the cycle of abuse and violence in our community because we understand that God loves each and every one of us the same and because we are all his precious creations to be treated with respect and dignity. Unfortunately, the victims that we see have often been brainwashed into believing that that they deserve the abuse, that there is nothing they can do to change their situation and that there is no one who would help them.

Immigration status or the lack there of, is often a powerful contributor to the sense of alienation and hopelessness felt by many victims. Education on the legal remedies available to immigrant crime victims empowers victims to reach out by showing them that there are options available to them and that

See ABUSE page 10



Ryan Bradberry, community educator in the STOPRA program, teaches about domestic violence, human trafficking and other violent crimes at the annual Encuentro Oct. 30.

This is Maria's story.

"... The first time that I knew something was wrong with Jose was only a few months into the marriage. He began to call me names, told me I was stupid, ugly and that nobody would love a nobody like me. When I was five months pregnant with our first child he suddenly became moody, angry, demanding and accusing. Then he went from words to violence. He began to beat me, but only in places others couldn't see. He punched me in my stomach and I nearly lost our child.

"Even after this, I stayed with my husband because I didn't believe that I was worthy of anything else ...

"... I tried to get help, but I didn't know how. He told me the police would never believe me and even when I did get the courage to call, the voice on other line spoke English, and I didn't know what to say so I hung up the phone. He never let me learn English, and he kept me from having friends so nobody knew the pain that my children and I suffered.

"I was frightened and embarrassed, and I didn't know what to do. I thought I must leave to protect my children, but he told me nobody would believe me and that he would find me always because I belonged to him. I didn't know where to go or who to ask for help. And so I stay and suffer every day from Jose's abuse."

We are all doing the work of the Lord

In baptism we are given "the 'imperishable seed' of the Word of God (which) produces its life-giving effect." (Catechism #1228) and thus each of us is called to bring the Word of God to growth in the soil of our daily lives.

Each of you who are reading this issue of *Catholic Charities Connections* is doing his or her part in living the Gospel in your personal life, caring for your family and volunteering to help with needs that touch you. As we gather as a larger family in the community of our parishes, we not only pray together, we also reach out to assist each other in the name of the Church. In such activity, we are truly pulling together to move the world toward the Kingdom of God.

However, in every diocese, in every community, there are issues that the Church is

called to address that are beyond the capabilities of a single family or a single parish. It is these pressing needs that the programs of Catholic Charities are called to address. Every program and service done through this outreach arm of the Church is done in response to the directives of scripture and Church teachings. Every program is done in the name



From the Director
Sister Mary Lou Stubbs

of the people of the Catholic Diocese of Little Rock — our very name, Catholic Charities,

indicates our outreach as Church for people who are at a desperate point in their lives.

The programs are truly catholic with a small "c" also — available to all who need the services. Not every person on our staff is of the Catholic religion, but all of us represent the caring response of the Church. Many of those we serve are not of the Catholic faith — but we serve all because we are putting the social teachings of the Church to work in the real world, in the lives of the real people whom we assist through times of trouble. Our service is catholic as well as Catholic-based.

The articles in this issue put a special emphasis on how each of our programs

See WORK page 10

Clinic attempts to address unmet needs

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops includes health care as one of the seven basic tenets of Catholic social teaching.

It is under the framework of the rights and responsibilities theme that states:

"The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. ...The right to life is fundamental and includes a right to food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care and essential social services."

However, under the current health care system, if one does not have insurance it is difficult to obtain basic health care. Many people assume that if a person is without insurance the emergency room at the hospital will handle their care. Generally, emergency rooms always treat emergency situations that are life threatening. Patients are treated regardless of insurance coverage. Primary urgent care can also be provided but after an extensive wait and greater cost than necessary for the same treatment in a physician's office. Hospitals do quite a lot of char-

"The Church is God's family in the world. In this family no one ought to go without the necessities of life."

"Deus Caritas Est" #25b.
Pope Benedict XVI, 2005

itable emergency health care, but the emergency room is not the most effective system for urgent and primary care family practice that is not life threatening.

Westside Free Medical Clinic and St. Vincent Community Clinic are two of the Catholic responses in central Arkansas designed to treat patients for those basic family practice conditions to prevent the complications which require emergency room visits. For instance, if you have recently been to a health screening and have been told your blood pressure was high that day or that your glucose level was elevated and advised to follow up with your primary physician, what do you do? What if you have always had insurance with your employment but have recent-

ly been laid off, or are a non-traditional student without insurance? What if English is not your first language and you do not know where to go?

Without insurance, most private physician offices require payments before you are seen and often that cost is not in your budget. Alternatively, the new walk-in clinics' cost are also not in your budget. The free and charitable clinics could be your answer, but we cannot do it alone. With an increased need for basic health care, our safety nets are weighted and taut because the need is so great.

We appreciate the funding we receive through our grants, but it is not enough to cover all the unmet health needs of Arkansas. As importantly, we could not function without our wonderful volunteers and specialists, but we need more professionals answering this call. This is a ministry with many challenges as we attempt to cover the basic right of health care within our means within the system we have at present. Our Catholic teaching calls on us all to respond to those most vulnerable among us.

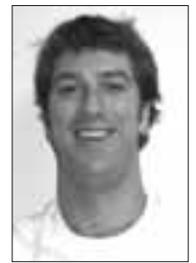
Karen DiPippa is the director of the Westside Free Medical Clinic in Little Rock.

BRIEFS

Continued from page 9



Orozco



Bradberry

English and Spanish and is quickly learning the procedures that support the immigration programs. Ryan Bradberry is the community education specialist in the Services Training Officers Prosecutors Program (STOP Program). He graduated from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville with a degree in communication and completed a minor in Spanish while studying in the Dominican Republic. He is providing educational workshops for community groups across the state.

Abuse

Continued from page 9

no one deserves to be abused. Victims also receive immigration legal services and this continued legal support assists victims to regulate their immigration status, which generally correlates with a stabilizing effect on their entire life.

Educating the community is one way the Crime Victims Services Unit is working to combat the overwhelming problems of domestic violence, trafficking and other violent crime targeting immigrants that is plaguing communities across the state. Ryan Bradberry, education specialist, knows the importance of education for the community.

"Holding workshops is a great way to actually get out in the community, hear some of the problems that people are facing and let them know that there is help available," Bradberry said. "It's our responsibility to help them learn about their rights and how things work so that they are not victimized or,

if they are; they know that we are here to help them escape the situation."

The final component of the comprehensive approach to addressing these issues is creating a dialogue with law enforcement agencies and advocate teams across the state. By training advocate teams in the community and parishes, we are able to identify and reach out to victims that likely would not have been identified or connected with the

"There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbor is indispensable."

"Deus Caritas Est" #28b.
Pope Benedict XVI, 2005

needed resources otherwise.

The unit provides training, materials and support to law enforcement agencies on the legal remedies available to immigrant victims of crime, the added components of immigrant domestic violence, victim identification and victimology. Law enforcement officers often come into contact to victims and may not have the training or ability to help these victims in the appropriate manner. Through training, departments can learn how to best reach out to the immigrant community, encourage crime reporting and reach victims.

By encouraging victims to seek out assistance and report crimes committed against them we are breaking the cycle of violence in each family that reaches out, identifying more abusers in the community and sending a message that domestic violence will not be tolerated in communities or parishes. Trained teams across the state will ensure that there is someone locally that can reach out to victims and encourage them to seek further assistance and escape to a life free of abuse.

Work

Continued from page 9

relates to our baptismal call and how each helps the seed which is the Word of God grow in the lives of those desperate for help and hope.

You are invited to read the stories and identify what Gospel mandates, or Catholic social teachings come to your mind as you do so. We also ask you to pray for the staff of Catholic Charities as we serve along with you to produce the "life-giving effect" of living the Word of God day by day. (Catechism #1228)

"How blessed is he ... who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry ... The Lord loves the righteous." Psalm 146:5-8

Things you can do

You can directly assist people through providing even small items or available time. Stop by our offices at 2500 N. Tyler Street in Little Rock to drop off items or contact us at (501) 664-0340 in Little Rock or (479) 927-1996 in Springdale.

ADOPTION SERVICES

Financial donations and prayers are always appreciated. Contact Antje Harris.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES ADMINISTRATION

Volunteer receptionists are needed to assist in the McDonald Center on weekdays. Contact Rhonda Pritts.

CRIME VICTIMS SERVICES

Community educators need a portable screen on which to project materials when teaching a group. They would also like to have a van to help get the staff

and their supplies from location to location. Contact Maricella Garcia.

Care bag items for children and families are needed. The bags can include new or very gently used teddy bears, stuffed animals, toys and art supplies; hygiene items (soap, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, razors, feminine products, toothpaste, toothbrushes); women's and children's shoes/clothing of all sizes or funds to purchase them. VAWA also needs financial support and volunteers to help remove victims from emergency situations. Contact Maricella Garcia.

DEVELOPMENT

Donations are welcome any time of year. As Christmas nears you are invited to help through the St. Nicholas Partners Program. Contact Rebecca Spencer.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL

Volunteers are needed to conduct AA meetings. Contact Tom Navin.

IMMIGRATION SERVICES

Volunteer attorneys to assist with complex immigration cases and attorneys for civil legal issues are needed. Volunteers also are needed to help to catalogue files for digital storage.

The office in Little Rock also needs lateral five-drawer file cabinets for storage of paper files. Contact Maricella Garcia or Frank Head.

PRISON MINISTRY

Spiritual books are appreciated by many prisoners and volunteers are needed to serve the spiritual and religious needs of Catholic inmates. Contact Tom Navin.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Donated used cars are needed by families as they settle into their new homes in Arkansas and move toward citizenship. Contact Frank Head or Sister Mary Lou Stubbs, DC.



WESTSIDE FREE MEDICAL CLINIC

Toothbrushes and toothpaste for clinic clients are needed. Medical specialists for referrals, physicians for the clinic (once a month or less), bilingual receptionists at the evening clinics and volunteers to interpret for patients at appointments arranged through the clinic and pharmacists are also needed. Contact Karen DiPippa.

AT A GLANCE

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord." (1 Cor. 12:4-5)

■ **Adoption Services** serves pregnant women who are considering adoption for their child and with families seeking to adopt. Ongoing support includes search and reunion services.

■ **Catholic Campaign for Human Development** is the U.S. bishops' effort to help eliminate poverty and assist groups to making efforts to do so. The collection is taken up in November each year on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Twenty-five percent of this collection stays in the diocese.

■ **Crime Victims Services** address victimization within the immigrant community focusing on domestic violence, human trafficking and other violent crimes. In addition to legal assistance to victims as they apply for visas, they provide training for law enforcement on available legal remedies, and educate the immigrant community on the need to report criminal activity and their legal rights as victims of crimes.

■ **Development** helps Catholic Charities pursue and maintain funding needed for basic operations and program development.

■ **Immigration Services** offices in Little Rock and Springdale provide legal services to assist people through the process of application to the U. S. citizenship and immigration services for families seeking reunification and stabilization, victims of criminal violence, refugees, foreign-national priests, and other non-citizens.

■ **Parish Social Ministries** provide education, mentoring and support to parishes as they develop their local ministries. This program also coordinates Disaster Response and Parish Emergency Assistance

■ **Prison Ministry** is responsible for seeing that the sacraments and spiritual support are available to the incarcerated in the 14 state prisons and four federal prisons. Training is provided to volunteers who are interested in this ministry.

■ **Refugee Resettlement** assists families displaced from their homelands by war or other national tragedies, and who meet the United Nations' criteria of credible fear of danger if they return, to stabilize in their new country.

■ **Social Action** monitors public policy matters and conducts workshops based on Catholic social teachings. This office also coordinates community activities that reach out to the poor and underserved.

■ **Westside Free Medical Clinic** serves adults without medical insurance through clinics, using volunteer medical providers. Clinics are provided in both English and Spanish.

Golf tournament raises more than ever

\$48,784 will support the varied programs of Catholic Charities

The first time ever Catholic Charities exceeded its goal of \$60,000 for the Bishop McDonald-Catholic Charities Golf Classic. As of Nov. 2, \$65,631.69 has been raised, with \$48,784.49 going directly Catholic Charities to support its programs.

The Cathedral of St. Andrew helped to start things off right by hosting the auction and cocktail party on the eve of the Golf Classic Sept. 19. More than 75 items, including an autographed Pete Rose bat and Waterford crystal bowl, were on display for the silent auction. Volunteers from several other parishes also helped to make it a memorable evening.

"We are grateful to everyone who pitched in behind the scenes, making sure that every detail was just right and making sure that there was plenty of wonderful food, desserts, and drinks for everyone — not to mention staying afterwards to clean up," chairwoman Alice Dennis said. "Because of the efforts of these volunteers, the party flowed seamlessly and was a huge success."

On Monday, Sept. 20, 45 teams played in the tournament. Many golfers paid a small fee in order to participate in special contests at various holes, also to the benefit of Catholic Charities. There was stiff competition all around to get the best score.

The Golf Classic is Catholic Charities' biggest fundraising event of the year.

"We are indebted to the many businesses and individuals who sponsor the Golf Classic



Pete Roth, a volunteer from the Cathedral of St. Andrew and master of ceremonies for the Catholic Charities cocktail party and silent auction, carries "The Bish" caricature of Bishop Andrew J. McDonald out of McDonald Hall.

and who donate items for the auction and cocktail party each year. Without them, these events could not exist. Catholic Charities is

especially grateful for underwriters St. Vincent Health System and Dr. Brad Baltz," director Sister Mary Lou Stubbs, DC, said.

'Who is my neighbor?' Parable's lessons apply to us today

The meaning of the parable is hard to miss: "Who is my neighbor?" the attorney asks. Your neighbor is any person in need who crosses your path.

I thought of the good Samaritan recently when, as director of Catholic Charities Immigration Services Northwest, I represented Moises (not his real name), a 35-year old man from Michoacan, Mexico, who is married to Jennifer, a Cherokee tribal member and U.S. citizen from our neighboring state of Oklahoma. Raised in rural poverty, Jennifer was also born deaf. Her rural public school had no accommodations for deaf students. A loving teacher realized her intelligence and recommended her for a scholarship to the Oklahoma School for the Deaf from which she graduated high school with a 3.5 grade point in 1985. She was accepted into college, but the summer after high school she married and got pregnant. Her husband drank a lot and didn't work much. She went to work and put off her dreams of college. After 10 years of beatings and abuse, she divorced her husband and kept working two jobs to raise her daughter.

In 2003, Jennifer met Moises at her church. He was a handy guy always fixing things for people. He was shy and had never married, coming to the U.S. when his family lost their farmland to drug gangs. At first they could only smile at each other or share a meal at a church social. Then Moises started studying sign language so he could speak to her. He offered to help fix her roof and helped her parents with other repairs. By 2005, Moises

"... a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying ... Who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite ... But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him ... Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed mercy on him.' And Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" (Luke 10:25-37)

was fluent at signing. In 2007, they married. Jennifer has gone back to community college to study nursing, her lifelong dream, to be a nurse to both hearing-impaired and non-impaired patients. Moises supports them by doing odd-jobs and carpentry.

The only problem for this wonderful, happy family is that Moises entered the U.S. without permission of the government in 2002, which means that, even though he is married to a U.S. citizen, the process for him

to legalize and stay here is limited and perilous. She must file a petition for him and he must leave the country, apply for a pardon (waiver) in Juarez, Mexico, and if it is not granted, wait 10 years before seeing her again.

I explained the difficult path ahead to Jennifer and Moises with great fear and concern. I did not want to break up this obviously loving family. But they never hesitated; sure in their faith that God had guided them together for a reason, they were sure he would watch over them now. So we worked together for months, gathering documents and testimonials. To win an I-601 waiver of penalties for "illegal presence," one must prove "extreme hardship" to the citizen or legal resident petitioner if she is without her husband for 10 years, yet it does not define what would be enough pain and suffering.

In March 2010, after four months waiting in Juarez and being robbed twice, Moises' I-601 waiver was approved. He was allowed to rejoin his family in Oklahoma as a legal permanent resident. Half of the applicants for waivers in Juarez that month were refused. Fortunately, none were my clients. But all were someone's neighbors and someone's beloved. When Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan, he was speaking to Jews who saw Samaritans as enemies and foreigners who had desecrated the Jewish Temple at Passover. But when asked by a lawyer, "Who are my neighbors," he chose a Samaritan. Who would he choose now?

Frank Head is the director of Catholic Charities Immigration Services in Springdale.

Learning about St. Nicholas Partners

What is St. Nicholas Partners?

St. Nicholas Partners is a special annual appeal to help raise money for the Catholic Charities programs that provide services directly to those who are in need:

- Adoption Services
- Immigration Services
- Prison Ministry
- Westside Free Medical Clinic
- Parish Emergency Assistance
- Services to victims of domestic violence

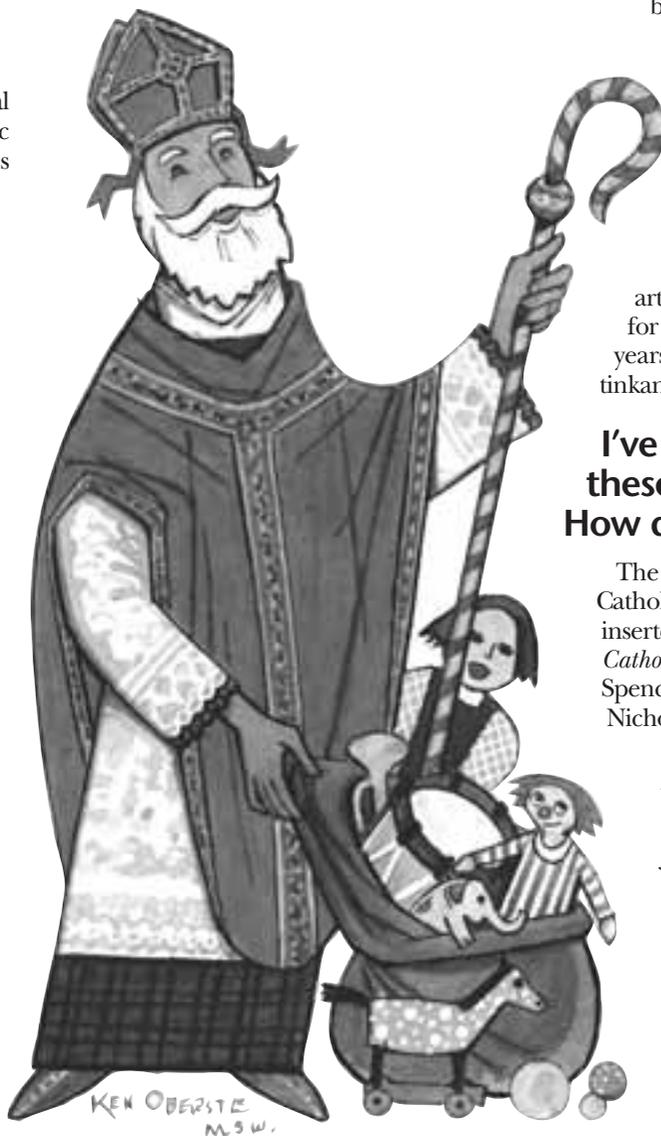
Donors also have the option of designating their gift for use where most needed within Catholic Charities.

How is it different from other Catholic Charities fundraisers?

It's different in two ways. First, it makes it easier for donors ("partners") to designate which Catholic Charities program they want their contribution to support. Second, because the appeal occurs right before Christmas, a donation on behalf of a friend or family member makes a perfect gift.

What makes St. Nicholas Partners special?

Each year, an original design depicting St. Nicholas is specially created and generously donated to Catholic Charities by an area artist. This artwork then



becomes a "Christmas card" distributed by Catholic Charities and inviting everyone to help support the ministry of their choice.

This rendering of St. Nicholas was created by Ken Oberste and uses transparent water color and ink. Oberste has been a commercial artist for 50 years, a freelance artist for 30 years and a studio artist for 20 years. Oberste can be reached at tinkandken@comcast.net.

I've never gotten one of these Christmas cards. How do I get one?

The cards will be sent to people on the Catholic Charities mailing list and were inserted in the Nov. 20 issue of *Arkansas Catholic*. You can also contact Rebecca Spencer to become part of this year's St. Nicholas Partners appeal.

Anything else?

Between July 1, 2009, and June 30, 2010, the Catholic Charities programs named above served 24,120 clients. For many of those who receive assistance from Catholic Charities, the holiday season can be particularly painful. Please help us continue to help them by supporting St. Nicholas Partners this year.

"The true subject of the various Catholic organizations that carry out a ministry of charity is the Church herself — at all levels."

"Deus Caritas Est" #32.
Pope Benedict XVI, 2005

Refugees' situations now more difficult

BY REBECCA BRYANT
REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT SPECIALIST

INDIANAPOLIS — The overseas situation is becoming more tenuous for refugees, Anastasia Brown, director of the U.S. bishop's Migration and Refugee Service Office of Refugee Programs, said at the Aug. 17-18 regional convention in Indianapolis, Ind.

"The Iraqis who have fled to neighboring countries and the Burmese refugees in Malaysia are trying to survive on the edges of society, akin to illegal aliens in the U.S.," she said.

Brown often travels overseas. Her update of the worldwide situation for refugees included these facts:

- The U.N. High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) asks for \$1 a day per refugee living in a camp. They receive about 40 cents.

- Less than 1 percent of all refugees are ever resettled.

- Of the millions of refugees in need of resettlement, about 100,000 are accepted around the world each year. The U.S. is presently admitting 80,000 to 85,000, the largest number in absolute terms but not per capita.

- Burmese refugees who flee to India are especially vulnerable. There have been many reports of robbery, beating and rape to Chin people in New Delhi. Few are ever resettled. Many of the Burmese Rohingya people make their way to refugee camps in Bangladesh. The U.S. will soon be admitting this group for the first time.

- Somalians continue to pour out of their country. The camps are full. Due to perceptions that they are not a favorable population for resettlement, they are rarely resettled anywhere but the U.S.

- At present, the top three countries of origin for refugees entering the U.S. are Iraq, Burma and Bhutan. The Bhutanese numbers are dwindling.

- The general consensus is that the number of Iraqi refugees will decrease as the U.S. withdraws. However, the absence of a plan to protect persecuted populations could cause another large outflow.

"Woe to those who enact evil statutes and to those who constantly record unjust decisions, so as to deprive the needy of justice and rob the poor of my people of their rights, so that widows may be their spoil and that they may plunder the orphans."

Isaiah 10:1-2

God guides adoptions during joys and sorrows

Sister Mary Lou Stubbs, DC, asked us to share how we see God in our work in the various departments at Catholic Charities. Of course, we see the hand of God in the answered prayers of the birth parents who are looking for a special family for their child and in those of the adoptive parents who long to create a family. November is National Adoption Month and also a time of thanksgiving for Americans. There is a lot to be thankful for in adoption. But there is much more to be aware of as well.

When people find out that I am the director of Catholic Adoption Services, they often say something like how wonderful that must be to get to work with the babies and what a blessing for the parents to be able to adopt. Yes — that is true that each new life is a miracle, little babies are amazing, and the adoptive parents are very grateful for the opportunity to become a family.

People who have more experience with adoption know that there really cannot be the joy without pain nor can there be fulfillment of God's plan without sacrifice. The birth parents experience more sorrow at releasing their child than can be understood by someone who has not gone through this incredible act of love and selflessness. They are told by some people that they are being selfish for not parenting their child and they know that really the opposite is true. Others may say that they do not see how anyone could possibly choose adoption — that they could never do it themselves. What a knife in the heart that is to the courageous individual who has enough strength to know that their decision to place a child for adoption is what is best for their child.

Adoptive parents are praised for opening their homes and told the child is lucky to have them for parents. These parents know that they are the fortunate ones to be parents and that this is not some sort of a good deed. The baby is the child of their heart whom they have wanted for a long time. They can understand some of the pain that a birth mother is going through when they have had their own sorrow of infertility and of not being able to have a biological child. They are happy for themselves but this is always connected to knowing another family's great

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you, or thirsty, and give you something to drink? 'And when did we see you a stranger, and invite you in, or naked, and clothe you? 'When did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?' The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me.'"

Matthew 25:31-46

loss in placing. Even when there is deep peace all around, there is still the knowledge of the pain.

So where is God in our pain? What about when an adoption does not go through and we worry about how this vulnerable baby will do in a birth family where there are a lot of problems? Why were our prayers not answered for this child to join a waiting and wonderful family? Why do great parents who long for a child have multiple miscarriages? What about the fear some birth mothers experience when an abusive birth father threatens to hurt her and her unborn child if she considers adoption? Why is life sometimes so incredibly hard?

I tell the clients that I am privileged to work with that I do not know the answers to the hard questions of faith. Above all, what I do know is that God loves us. Very simply — over and over — God loves us. I believe we are supposed to pray and that prayer helps, but we do not know how those prayers will be answered. But if we pray for the highest good to prevail, we will be more aligned with the divine than if we pray for a specific outcome.

As workers here for Catholic Charities, we are not the source, but we can be the channel through whom God can work in the lives of our clients. I can only do my best every day and then let go. We see God's presence all around us in the generosity of our donors and volunteers, in the love of parents for their children, in the dedicated work of the Catholic Charities and diocesan staff, and in the changed lives of those who have experienced compassion in the name of Christ.

Antje Harris is the director of Catholic Adoption Services.