

Meeting Our Unhoused Brothers And Sisters With Compassion

Voice of the Poor: Third Thursday Webinar

January 2023



**Society of St. Vincent de
Paul** NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE USA

Before We Get Started

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Thank you for joining us today!

We will take questions at the end or post your question in the chat box.

Answer the poll questions during the webinar.

- The webinar will be recorded.
- We'll send out the slides and the recording to all registrants.
- We have a couple question survey at the end of the presentation, so please stick around.



Agenda

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Opening Prayer

Criminalizing Homelessness Around America

Catholic Social Teaching / Religious Perspective

The SVdP Response: [Housing Task Force](#) & Your Community Involvement

Closing Prayer



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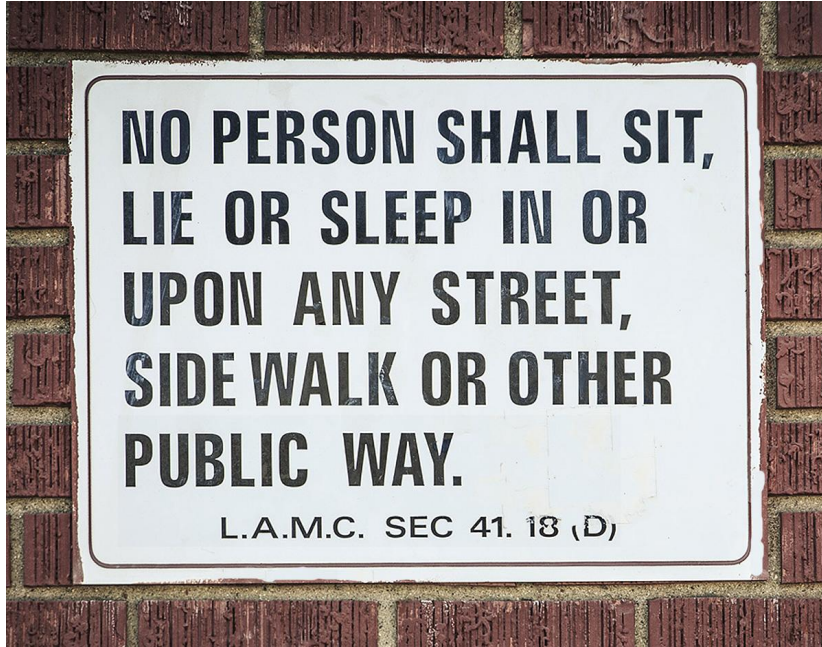
Opening Prayer

O Lord, to whom no one is a stranger and from whose help no one is ever distant, look with compassion on those without a place to live;

Restore them, we pray, to a home of their own, and give us a kind heart to help the homeless in their need. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



® Criminalizing Homelessness - What Does That Mean?



Refers to policies, laws, and ordinances that make it illegal, difficult, or impossible for unsheltered people to engage in the normal everyday activities that most people carry out on a daily basis, or in activities that help make them safer.



The National Homelessness Law Center

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States are increasingly targeting homeless people with criminal penalties and incarceration for such acts of survival as public sleeping, camping and asking for charity.



SHARE NO MORE:
*The Criminalization
of Efforts to Feed
People in Need*



Key Findings from the Law Center's Report

- 48 states have at least one law restricting behaviors that prohibit or restrict conduct of people experiencing homelessness.
- 24 states have laws restricting loitering, loafing, and vagrancy in particular public places.
- 4 states have laws restricting lodging, living, or sleeping in vehicles.
- 15 states have laws restricting camping in particular public places.



Criminalization of the Homeless Across America

- Laws criminalizing homelessness have multiplied in the last 10 years in 187 studied cities
- In Colorado, 76 largest cities have passed 351 ordinances that target homeless people
- In Dallas, police issued 11,000 “sleeping in public” citations between 2011 and 2015
- Honolulu adopted a spate of laws that target homeless people, and police ramped up enforcement of these “quality of life” ordinances



® New Missouri Law (As Of Jan 1, 2023)

Missouri Independent Headline:

Advocates, providers scramble as Missouri's new homelessness law goes into effect

A law passed last year made sleeping on state-owned land a misdemeanor in Missouri. It went into effect Jan. 1, but critics say there is still a lack of clarity from the state surrounding its implementation

BY: **CLARA BATES** - JANUARY 17, 2023 5:55 AM



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® Questions About New Missouri Law

Could provide blanket justification for law enforcement to intensify harassment of unhoused people.

What land will be subject to these new penalties? No guidance from the city about whether they will enforce the law.

MO House Minority Leader filed a bill to repeal the homelessness law. She said “folks already having a hard time engaging in society — adding fines on top...is not going to improve that situation.”



® Homelessness Law Center's "Housing Not Handcuffs" Report

Criminalizing homelessness is unconstitutional, racially discriminatory, and just bad policy

Focus on fixing those policies to ensure the basic human right to housing for all.

Criminalization exacerbates homelessness by creating additional barriers to housing and employment.

Invest in affordable housing at levels necessary to end homelessness in their respective states.



8 TAKEAWAYS

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1. Homelessness is a chronic problem
2. The criminalization of homelessness is growing
3. Criminalizing homelessness does nothing to solve the root problem
4. These laws criminalize life-sustaining behavior



8 Takeaways Continued

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5. Criminalizing homelessness make the problem worse
6. Criminalizing homelessness is expensive
7. Criminalizing homelessness may be unconstitutional
8. Prosecutors and state legislators can choose to stop criminalizing homelessness

[Source: The Criminalization of Homelessness: Explained - The Appeal](#)



® Catholic Teaching: Dignity of the Human Person

“Man alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God’s own life . . . This is the fundamental reason for his dignity. Being in the image of God, the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone” (§356)

Catechism of the Catholic Church



® Catholic Teaching: Dignity of the Human Person

If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?
(First letter of St. John 3:18)

It is not enough to open you window slightly at the traffic light and slip a couple of dollars. As Christians we are called to encounter



Culture of Encounter

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In Frateli Tutiti the Holy Father calls our attention to the fact that the passers-by were religious people.

“ It shows that belief in God and the worship of God are not enough to ensure that we are actually living in a way pleasing to God. A believer may be untrue to everything that his faith demands of him, and yet think he is close to God and better than others.”



Culture of Encounter

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We are called.....to serve the least among us is our vocation

Not as tourists shall we see the injured man on the side of the road
Instead we journey as the pilgrims that we are. Not seeking comfort
but rather in total surrender to the Holy Spirit's guidance.

To seek not only to heal the injured man but to seek an end to his
vulnerabilities.

We are called to restore his dignity



Ways to Act

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Learn what your Continuum of Care(CoC) is doing locally, get involved to fill gaps

Listen to your unhoused community, what are they saying are their challenges and how would they like

Advocated for local policies that create inclusive environments for unhoused communities and that support them



Discussion Questions

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What is your unhoused community saying are their challenges and how would they like support?

How has your conference/council been able to support unhoused people?

Do you know about the [SVdP's Housing Task Force?](https://svdpusa.org/housing)

- <https://svdpusa.org/housing>



Closing Prayer

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Dear Lord,

Your Word often talks about people in need finding safety.

We pray today for homeless people, that children and families in need with no place to call home will be guided to places of peace and security.

