

# Thoughts on Christian Social Responsibility

by Ron Mayer

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul serves the poor and the afflicted of our community, and is directly impacted by the controversy involving illegal immigration.

The Society has taken a public position that regardless of what views we hold concerning the nature of the problem and the possible solution of the problem, we all have one item in common. We are Christians. Undocumented persons are still human beings who are made in the image and likeness of God. In the eyes of God, they are no different than you and me. As a consequence, they deserve to be treated as human beings.

We cringe at aspects of the history of our country in dealing with immigrants. From the treatment of the Irish fleeing the famine of Ireland wherein they were treated as devious papal serpents undermining the foundations of America to the Chinese workers who built our railroads and upon completion were shunned and marginalized from their community. *The tragedy is that it is happening again.* There is a hysteria pervading our society wherein it is open season to mistreat and abuse undocumented persons. The stories extend from undocumented persons refusing to report crimes committed on them or those that they witness because their reward for being a good citizen is to be arrested for deportation to Sheriff's deputies being stationed at parishes that are predominantly Hispanic on Good Friday intimidating persons to stay away for fear of their immigration status being questioned.

St. Vincent de Paul is asking for two items. First, that any discussion involving immigration contain and convey the attitude that these people are human beings and deserve to be treated with human dignity. And secondly, that you contact your elected representatives in Congress and at the state level and request that any legislative solution not violate basic human rights.

When Jesus Christ said, "Feed my sheep and take care of my children", he did not make an exception for persons who do not have their immigration status in order. If we as Christians do not stand up and voice alarm at the current treatment of undocumented persons, who will?