



# Social Concerns Focus

*OUR FOCUS THIS ISSUE: CHRISTMAS SHARING TREE*

## Catholic Social Teaching

### *Option for the Poor and*

***Vulnerable:*** The Sharing Tree program brings dignity and help with human basic needs for those who are unable to do so for themselves. What better time than the Christmas season to remember the true meaning of "giving" and to reach out to the poor and vulnerable and give them the love and consideration the need.

***Solidarity: We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic or economic differences are.*** The Sharing Tree brings peace and hope for those giving and receiving to help bring solidarity within the community.

### ***Call to Action Suggestions:***

- Drop-off nonperishable food items, laundry soaps, paper goods, and hygiene necessities in the boxes by the church doors.
- Visit someone in a nursing home or a homebound person who seldom receives visitors. Inquire at the desk as you enter the nursing home or call the parish office for names of homebound parishioners.
- Pick a name off our church Sharing Tree or a tree in the community. Spread the joy!
- Catholic Charities has a Share the Spirit program for those wanting to provide gifts and food for families in need. If you want to be a donor call 320-650-1654

## Annual Sharing Tree project promotes the 'true spirit' of Christmas

The history of the Sharing Tree project is extensive. It was introduced to St. Joseph's Parish in 1986 by a parishioner, after reading about the idea in a Guidepost magazine, to Pastor Father Vince Leiser. Father Leiser thought it was a good idea and the project was presented to the parish council who accepted it openly.

The first year a small group of parishioners championed the task and the outpouring of gifts was beyond all expectations. Over thirty families were helped in the first year alone. Many families and individuals have been helped since.

The purpose of the Sharing Tree is to share the spirit of Christmas and provide the needy of the parish and community with food through the help of generous parishioners. Parishioners may purchase gifts themselves, or donate funds and have the gifts purchased by the coordinators of the Sharing Tree.

The Sharing Tree project is normally conducted on the first three Sundays in Advent and is attempted to be completed near the 15th of December.

Almost all of the past volunteers will share many cheerful stories of their experiences received from helping with the Sharing Tree project. Some share their stories of their own Christmases of need and their desire to return the favor. Some memories are from receiving as a youth and then feeling a calling to help others with a need similar to their own. More than once a special call would come in and within a couple of days someone would fill the need. There have been calls for items ranging from food to clothing, to assistance with personal mat-

ters. Once an elderly person called needing wood for a wood-burning stove and within a day someone had donated several cords of wood. The elderly person was so elated and



*St Joseph's Parish is looking for a **Sharing Tree Committee Chairperson.** Anyone who would like to be rewarded with joy and many happy memories and would choose to volunteer their time to help with the preparations, please call Joyce Dinndorf at St. Joseph's Parish Office – 251-5231.*

the Sharing Tree committee was shocked with joy! Since then, there have been many little "miracles" that have resulted from the Sharing Tree project.

It is time to start preparing for the 2009 Sharing Tree Program. With the recession and high rate of unemployment of this past year, the Sharing Tree Project is needed as much, if not more than ever.

***You are invited to join the Social Concerns Committee! Contact one of the following members:***

Sister Gloria Haider • Peggy Imholte • Patty Keeling • Maria Lahr • Kathy Peterson