

Shelter The Homeless



"For I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:34)

Our True Church is our only Home on earth, and Heaven is our only Home in eternity. The grandest mansions and the finest estates mean nothing if they house souls homeless of God. One can build a thousand homes for the needy yet keep this society morally and spiritually homeless. A home may protect us from the elements of nature, but a homeless soul cannot protect us from the elements of hell. Furthermore, how can anyone pretend to house the poor while condoning ripping the unborn from their home within the mother's womb? Social justice must house the soul before it can house the body.

Familiar sights in many cities worldwide are growing numbers of homeless men, women and even children sleeping in doorways, train stations and under bridges. Causes of homelessness are many and varied: the lack of permanent, affordable housing; overcrowded, temporary shelters; unemployment and underemployment; breaking up of families; mental and physical disabilities; and, on a major scale, wars and natural disasters that displace families and whole communities.

Despite our abundant resources to aid the homeless, we still have an estimated two million "street people" in the United States. In addition to helping our own locally, we have a moral responsibility to reach out with aid to people made homeless by disasters and conflicts in poverty-stricken countries.

Bear in mind that counted among the homeless are not only "street people," but also "migrants, refugees, orphans, and foster children Providing shelter entails fostering a sense of belonging."

As God's hands on Earth, we can help the homeless.

Here are some suggestions:

- Understand the need for group homes for homeless and disabled people in your community.
- Donate to religious and nonprofit secular charities that care for displaced persons.
- Support national and international disaster relief programs.
- Volunteer your services to organizations that build affordable homes for the poor.
- Advocate for legislation to provide housing for poverty-stricken and disabled persons.
- Offer your love and home to an orphan, or consider becoming a foster parent.
- Provide a temporary home for migrant workers or refugees who are fleeing oppression.
- Welcome newcomers to your school or community; help them to feel at home.
- Organize a parish undertaking to provide shelter and support for a needy local family.
- Remember, to provide someone with a sense of belonging is to fulfill a basic human need.

You're not likely to drive to the inner city, locate some homeless people and invite them to stay with you and your family for a while. This is partially because you are not a homeowner with a place of your own to invite them. That doesn't mean you can't shelter the homeless in other ways.

Here's one: If you do some checking, you'll probably find a group in your area that rehabs old housing to make it safe and habitable for families on low incomes. There may be a group in your parish that does this on weekends. If you're skilled in construction, that's a plus. If you can't tell a jigsaw from a piece of drywall, they'll find a way for you to help anyway. This is a