

OPC Communication Chairperson Convention Presentation
Mary Queen of Peace & Homelessness
July 2018

Mary, Queen of Peace, is a title of our Blessed Virgin Mary in the Roman Catholic Church. She is represented in art holding a dove and an olive branch, symbols of peace. Her official memorial in the General Roman Calendar is on July 9 in the universal Church except for Hawaii and some churches in the United States

I looked up "Communication" on the internet and it was defined as: a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.

As Communication Chairpersons, the goal for our project on homelessness was to inform/instruct members about homelessness.

Since the beginning of my term I have been researching different sites and have discovered facts such as:

- 1 in 7 people live in poverty in Canada.
- Young people who are homeless (ages 13-24) make up approximately 20 percent of the homeless population in Canada. 40 percent of homeless youth were younger than 16 when they first experienced homelessness.
- People living with disabilities (both mental and physical) are twice as likely to live below the poverty line.
- Nearly 15% of people with disabilities live in poverty, 59% of which are women.
- Estimates place the number of homeless individuals living with a disability or mental illness as high as 45% of the overall homeless population.

Jesse Thistle a scholar at the University of York in Toronto, working with indigenous people and elders across the country redefines "homelessness" as such:

"Indigenous homelessness, from an Indigenous perspective, is about the disconnection from things like spirituality, the family, land, to each other, to cosmology, to Creator. That's the disconnection from 'all my relations,'" he said, referring to the Indigenous perspective on interconnectivity. That is not so different on how it affects us.

How does this information help us? By being informed on the issues of homelessness, it allows us to be aware that it is a growing problem, that will not go away, unless we are willing to help. It may be as

simple as a donating money, and food....but it is also understanding the causes. What can we do to eliminate the root cause....can we push the government to do something or more about it?

How does Mary Queen of Peace fit in? As she holds out the olive branch a symbol of peace, can we help the homeless on the street, the panhandler on the corner, by allowing them dignity through gift card initiatives such as we are doing at this convention, by speaking to them, by making eye contact, smiling and having compassion?

It may make us uncomfortable to encounter someone who is making a living on the street, but it does not change the fact they deserve the same rights as we do. Like Mary Queen of peace, your smile and your kind words may be the olive branch to understanding the individual and bringing them some dignity and happiness/joy in their lives. I believe this is something we can all do without much effort.

Respectfully submitted,
Marie-Theresa Lamphier