



Saint Joseph Cathedral

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Advice from the experts on helping our homeless neighbors:

1. **Be prepared.**
2. **Acknowledge them as human beings.**
3. **Don't give money to panhandlers**
4. **Offer alternatives.**
5. **Get involved and advocate.**

We should strive to keep our hearts open to the sufferings and distress of other people, and pray continually that God may grant us that spirit of compassion which is truly the spirit of God.

-Saint Vincent de Paul

Cathedral Connections

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Helping Our Homeless Neighbors

A Letter from Fr. Peter

Dear Parishioners

We have seen growing numbers of homeless men and women on the streets of Downtown San Diego. Often, we encounter them on the corner outside church. As Christians, we wonder what can we do that will really help.

Seeking answers to these questions, St. Joseph sponsored a Neighborhood Forum on Homelessness. We called on some real world experts who know our neighborhood. They came from Fr. Joes' Villages, the San Diego Rescue Mission, the Ladle Fellowship of First Presbyterian Church, Catholic Charities, and the San Diego Police Homeless Outreach Team.

Here's What the Experts Told Us

1) Be prepared. With nearly 5000 people living on San Diego streets, it is hardly a surprise when you run into a homeless person. There are often homeless people outside church before and after mass. Think about how you want to handle these inevitable encounters, anything from a smile, to hello, or even sometimes offering a snack.

2) Acknowledge the man or woman as a human being. Homeless people are children of God, men and women, just like us, who have found themselves beyond the limits of their resources, for many different reasons. Say hello. If you feel safe, strike up a conversation. The worst part of homelessness, we were told, is often the feeling of being invisible.

3) Don't give money to panhandlers. Every single one of our experts told us that cash handouts typically go to things we would rather not support, like drugs and alcohol. Also, panhandling undermines the dignity of the homeless, and facilitates a long-term pattern of failure and isolation.

As a parish, we urge you not to give money to panhandlers. As Christians, we are taught to help the hungry, but free food for the homeless is widely available in downtown San Diego. Most homeless people learn quickly when and where the meals are served. However, hardened by years on the streets, many panhandlers come up with clever and convincing stories to make you feel uncomfortable enough to soothe yourself by passing over a few coins. The "spare change" may provide just enough comfort to keep people from seeking real change in their lives. The money they receive outside the Cathedral undermines their motivation to move forward.

Consider dropping those cash contributions in the church **Poor Box** – there is one at each door of the Cathedral. We use every penny gathered for the emergency needs of the poor, and to support neighborhood Christian Service Agencies. Think of it as "Spare Change for a Real Change." Then, when you say "no" to a request for money on the corner, you can truthfully add, "I already support the homeless."

4) Offer an Alternative. If you want to do something immediate, our experts suggested offering something concrete, like a granola bar, a bottle of water, clean socks, or a gift card to a fast food restaurant.



Help is available 24 Hours a day. Just Dial 2-1-1

Information about services for people in need is available via a 24/7 phone service. Call 2-1-1 anytime night or day to speak with a highly trained information and referral specialist. Or, you can go online at: www.211sandiego.org

What is Sleepless In San Diego 2011?

The San Diego Rescue Mission, only five blocks from St. Joseph, offers real help for the homeless, with lodging, meals and a full year residential recovery program in an atmosphere of Christian faith. The Social Ministry Committee of St. Joseph invites your participation with us in **Sleepless in San Diego**, Sat. Sept 24 and Sun. Sept 25, a fun filled Rescue Mission fundraiser combining a Christian Rock Concert, a festival of activities on homelessness, and a chance to make a real contribution. Similar to a walk-a-thon, participants can sleep out overnight (In the safe surroundings of Point Loma's Liberty Station!) and recruit friends and colleagues to pledge donations in support of the effort.

If you have questions, call our Team Captain, Mike Kosakowski at (619) 405-2589 or email him at mkosa@earthlink.net. To become a member of our Team, go to www.sleeplessandiego.org for full information. Click on Register to Sleep Out, then Join a Team, and use the drop down box to join the St. Joseph Cathedral Team.

A pocket guide to the available services, San Diego's Downtown Directory of Social Services, is available in the vestibule of the church. Carry a copy with you, and pass it on to a homeless person when you get the chance. There is a wide variety of services available for the homeless, from food to long-term housing assistance. Nobody needs to go hungry.

5) Get involved and become an advocate.

Getting involved at St. Joseph: We have a number of ongoing projects. To become more active, consider joining our Social Ministry Committee

Monthly Food Collection: Bring in food for our monthly drive. On the first weekend of each month, we gather canned food after all masses. This food goes to the Catholic Charities Emergency Services Office, right across our plaza, where it is distributed directly to the homeless and needy.

Annual Shoe Drive: Save your gently used shoes for our yearly collection. Each winter we gather, renew and distribute usable shoes for the homeless. This year, St. Joseph parishioners provided several hundred pairs of comfortable shoes for homeless men and women, distributed to neighborhood service ministries. Next year, we hope to do even more. Get your coworkers and friends involved in the project.

Getting involved beyond our parish: We urge you join in the work of local Christian groups providing service to the homeless. You will be hearing about ways to participate with the St. Joseph community as we partner with our neighborhood Christian social service organizations.

In Christ,

Fr. Peter Escalante

Our Neighbors in Caring

The Social Ministry Committee of St. Joseph Cathedral strongly endorse these organizations and their activities. We encourage you to support them with your time and treasure.

Catholic Charities : (619) 231-2828

Website: www.ccdsd.org

Volunteer Opportunities: www.ccdsd.org/docs/VolunteerOpportunities.pdf

San Diego Rescue Mission: (619) 365-4594 *

Website: www.sdrescue.org

Volunteer Opportunities: Click "Get Involved" tab on website home page

Father Joe's Villages : (619) 446-2100

Website: www.fatherjoesvillages.org

Volunteer Opportunities: Click "Volunteer" tab on website home page

Ladle Fellowship (First Presbyterian Church)

Website: www.ladlefellowship.org

Volunteer Opportunities: Click "Volunteering" tab on website home page

Third Avenue Charitable Organization (First Lutheran Church) (619) 235-9445 ext. 2

Website: www.tacosd.org

Volunteer Opportunities: Click "Volunteers" tab on website home page

Alpha Project (619) 542-1877

Website: info@alphaproject.org

Volunteer Opportunities: Click "Volunteer Opportunities" on website..

* Thanks, San Diego Rescue Mission, for the outline from their video, "5 Ways to Help a Homeless Person." To see the video, go to www.sleeplessandiego.kintera.org