



Fourth Sunday of Easter April 26, 2015

Pastor's Column

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No Room in the Inn?

"We are called to be builders of bridges by bringing into the very heart of the Church and society those so often condemned to live or die on the periphery – the poor and the homeless of our nation and our world, the unborn, victims of sexual trafficking and abuse, especially clergy sexual abuse; the aged and disabled, those who are incarcerated. We are called to build bridges which span the partisan divides that now frequently separate these issues of human dignity into warring camps, and to foster an ecclesial culture which sees with the clarity of Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day that all forms of marginalization which deny the dignity of the human person are antithetical to the Gospel and repugnant to God."

The above words are taken from Bishop Robert McElroy's Installation Mass on April 15, 2015 when he became the Bishop of San Diego.

The phrase that struck me was "those so often condemned to live or die on the periphery..." There are so many people, in so many ways, for so many reasons who live on the periphery of our Church, our families, our neighborhoods, our cities...

The San Diego Organizing Project (SDOP) of which our Parish is an active member is focused on reaching out, through the efforts of a variety of faith communities, to those who are on the peripheries and try to help create pathways to assist them in making their way into the fabric of the community.

The issue that SDOP is presently focused on is the "In Lieu Fee" for developers within the City of Oceanside.

Oceanside's inclusionary zoning ordinance requires developers building more than 4 units to build 10% of their units as affordable housing. Affordable Housing is a huge need in Oceanside which is 2,707 units below the state-mandated number of lower-income and low-income houses we are required to have in the city.

If the developer doesn't want to build the affordable units, they have the option to pay a per-unit "In Lieu Fee." In 2003, the fee per unit was \$10,275. There was a schedule for this fee to rise along with inflation and the rising cost of living – rising to \$18,150 by 2004 – but the fee was frozen at \$10,275 in 2003. This is lower than all surrounding cities (Carlsbad's is \$20,000) and at the low end state-wide.

In the following years, the City Council, by a 3-2 vote decided to practically eliminate the fee, cutting it to \$1,500.

Susan Tinsky of the San Diego Housing Federation called this "precedent setting in terms of the 'In Lieu Fee'...this is a new low for the inclusionary housing programs, both regionally and statewide and nationally."

Estimated loss of affordable housing funding since this cut is \$3.3 million. Since \$1 of local funding can be leveraged with state and federal funding, this amounts to over \$30 million lost revenue that could have been used to make up the 2,707 unit gap.

The Oceanside City Council is now re-evaluating the "In Lieu Fee" and there is the hope that they may do so.

SDOP is requesting that the Oceanside Council introduce an ordinance to restore the "In Lieu Fee" to at least its level prior to the cut.

SDOP member congregations and clergy fully support the restoration of this fee, and are organizing to publically support its restoration.

What will the restoration of the "In Lieu Fee" do? It will help to bring those who are on the periphery of our community into the fabric of our community.

Think about all of our landscapers, housekeepers, maintenance personnel, hotel housekeepers, etc. who help to keep our Oceanside Community and economy moving forward; yet, the majority of these people cannot afford to buy a home in the community in which they work. They are on the periphery of our community and we need to assist them to bring them into the fabric of our community.

We are 2,707 units below the state-mandated number of affordable housing units we are required to have in our city!

Is there not "Room in the Inn" for our brothers and sisters? Are we no better than the Innkeeper who put the Holy Family in a stable in which Jesus was born? Have we not gotten direction from that Nativity Account?

If you would like to help our brothers and sisters come in from the periphery, ***I encourage you to join me at a meeting with the Mayor of Oceanside, Jim Wood, on Thursday, April 30, at 7:00pm at Mission San Luis Rey in the Dining Room of the Mission. Please join me!***

If you would like more information, please contact Sr. Maureen or me.

There is "Room in the Inn!"

Fr. Mike