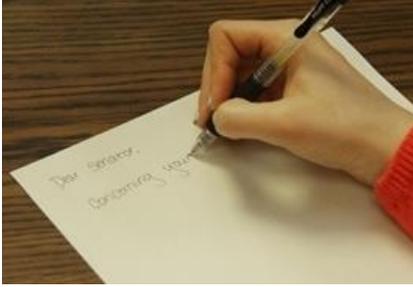


ADVOCATES FOR JUSTICE



My granddaughter was born the morning of this writing. The internet allows me to marvel at Gracie through my wife's photographs and Facetime, until we are properly introduced at Christmastime.

Gracie will have a voice; like every new-born baby, the wail will be her means of communicating her needs and displeasures. Eighteen years must pass, however, before she will have a voice that elected officials may listen to. Until then, her parents must be her advocates.

Last night I sat with dozens of Catholics and hundreds of people of faith who attended a dinner celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice ([IMIrJ](#)). "The coalition responds actively and publicly to the suffering of our immigrant brothers and sisters in the U.S." This often means speaking out their behalf. Until Congress passes [Comprehensive Immigration Reform](#), we citizens must be their voices through the megaphones of ballots and advocacy.

On Friday, a hundred people marked the opening of the fall [40 Days for Life](#) campaign by attending mass at St. Stephen Catholic Church. They and many others will spill out on the streets to pray and hold peaceful vigils for an end to abortion. They will stand prayerfully in front of facilities that provide abortion with the hope of showing their love to even one struggling mother; with the hope of saving even one unborn child. Because 40 Days for Life is peaceful and prayerful, their voices will be quieter than other advocates, but just as persistent and just as determined.

On Monday I sat with Mike Davis, the Executive Director of [Knowing Me Ministries](#). Knowing Me Ministries works *with* the homeless and received a grant from the [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#). We talked about advocates for the homeless proposing this solution or that solution or a third alternative. I questioned whether we were hearing from the homeless themselves because it occurred to me that we were hearing from many advocates for the homeless – few of them unified – but no one was organizing the homeless into one politically-active group.

"The Lord hears the cry of the poor," sings today's psalmist.

Sirach's words give hope to the poor and disquiets the comfortable: "The prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds; it does not rest till it reaches its goal, nor will it withdraw till the Most High responds, judges justly and affirms the right."

In addressing the plight of those around us, we are truly living out Christ's message to love and serve all those in need. Our faith calls us to be advocates for justice.

But let's face it, our systems and structures are attuned to voices of power. Until God's Kingdom of Heaven is finally realized on Earth, then we must sing out in the corridors of power. We must sing loudly and raise our voices to defend the rights of others!

The great choir of justice sings for those whose voices are silenced. In solidarity, the great choirs of peace and justice invites those with untrained voices, those with voices that crack, and even those with voices that sign off key. And they get noticed!

Advocacy is the active participation in changing the structures of society. The sins of our structures, which Saint John Paul II calls "social sin," such as society's attitudes towards the migrant, the poor, the unborn, the homeless and the prisoner, must change.

As advocates we must join *with* the voiceless (and in the case of the unborn, *for* the voiceless). We must be a voice for the voiceless. As a voice we have power that the voiceless don't have – we are constituents. We vote. We must speak out on behalf of others. We must sing out on behalf of others. We must join the choirs of justice.

(Readings for the 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time)



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