

What is Advocacy, and what does it have to do with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul?

Advocacy is defined as follows: Advocacy is the act of speaking in support of human concerns and needs. Where people have their own voice, advocacy means making sure they are heard; when they have difficulty speaking, it means providing help; where they have no voice, it means speaking for them. (from Making Changes: A place to Start, Ministry for Christians and Families.)

Advocacy is not a political activity, but by the nature of many of the issues addressed, much of the correspondence would be directed to politicians. It does however address issues and not politicians or political parties.

So what does Advocacy have to do with our Society ? Our Rule states: *"Once they had made personal contact with the poor, they saw that charity is inseparable from the demands of justice. To the best of their ability, they claimed justice for the poor."* (Preamble to the Rule, - 1 Recall to Sources)

So how do we "Claim Justice for the Poor" ? We, as Cause Advocates, (also known as systems advocates) can speak on behalf of the poor. A Cause Advocate is defined as one who:

- works to influence social and economic systems to bring about positive change for the poor.
- Using the voice and good name of the Society, speaks out on issues of justice and social conditions.
- Address these concerns to both political and social institutions to effect change.
- Present information in a positive, non-confrontational manner;
- Respects the dignity of the other person.

We will continue to identify national issues affecting the poor, and speak out on their behalf. We will be contacting national politicians, as well as writing letters to the editors of national Catholic publications and major newspapers. This initiative is seen as a long-term project. We will, as the nature of the Society dictates, approach this initiative slowly and carefully. The requirement for research on issues will also suggest a time consuming process. We are interested in receiving input from the membership as well as suggested issues, topics and background information.