

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

Banquet employs symbolism to heighten awareness of world hunger

By Amanda Benjamin, student writer

A flier for the St. John Fisher Newman Group's second annual Hunger Banquet conveys that every 3.6 seconds, a person dies of hunger. Three of every four of these people are children.

"The statistics are mind boggling," said Lisa Brown, pastoral associate for the St. John Fisher University Parish. "It's beyond tragic."

To do its part in addressing this situation, the parish will present the Hunger Banquet at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 5, in the Gold Rooms of the Oakland Center.

"Community is built when we join forces for something good," Brown said. "Ideally, I would love to have creative solutions come out of this."

Brown has been working with the St. John Fisher Newman Group for 10 years, which has provided ministry and sought to meet needs of the community since the mid-1960s. Brown said the goals of the Hunger Banquet are not only to raise awareness and funds, but to continue building community at OU.

When banquet attendees arrive, they will receive an identity by lottery and sit in a certain place where they are served a meal according to that identity. One person will have a steak, five will have sandwiches, 20 will have rice and beans, and the remainder will sit on the floor and eat rice. According to Brown, the experience is an interesting role play.

"It's weird to see someone eating a big steak while you're eating rice on the floor," she said.

Mary Karasch, a professor of Latin American history at OU, has spent a lot of time in Latin America and seen the poverty there firsthand.

"You can't ignore it," she explained. "The hungry children come right up to you and beg directly."

As keynote speaker at the banquet, Karasch said she wants to give people a sense of the injustice of world hunger and increase sensitivity to it. She plans to raise particular hunger issues, specifically in Haiti, Guatemala and Brazil.

"Hunger is really a major problem in Haiti due to the devastation, the hurricanes," Karasch said.

Participants in the Hunger Banquet are encouraged to share a donation of \$5. All proceeds will go to Oxfam America hunger relief efforts. For more information on the event, visit www.oucampusministry.com.

SUMMARY

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