

How do I live the social gospel in light of my Marianist vocation?

It has taken me a long time to come to an answer to that question, and I'm still not sure it's all that perfect, but the attempt to do so is worth it.

I've lived and worked in Eastern Africa three times now. One of the many things I've learned as a result of my living there is that serving in Africa doesn't necessarily mean one will be better able to respond to the needs of the poor for they are greater than we can ever provide. Another result of my living in Africa is a deeper personal call to social responsibility. As a result I have decided to give some of my time to serving the needs of the poor and those living on the margins of society in whatever setting I live.

Fr. Phil Hoelle, SM, made that decision easier when he wrote me before I returned from Kenya in 1999 asking me to consider serving on the board of the Dakota Center in Dayton, Ohio. Serving on the board has allowed me to work with and train Charles Averette, the maintenance person at Dakota Center. It is good for me to venture beyond the familiar cultural setting of Beavercreek to the more unfamiliar of Inner-West Dayton. I don't give a ton of time; I go to the center at least once a month for board meetings or to meet with Charles to help him figure out how to tackle certain maintenance problems that arise.

I have had an idea about our Province's corporate response to the social gospel which I would like to share. It would be interesting for each community to have a conversation each year where each brother is asked to answer this question: What am I doing in a real and practical way to respond to the needs of the poor and powerless in our city? I believe that each brother has gifts that can be used in responding to these needs. The options are endless....all we need is the ability to dream and the courage step out of our circle of social and cultural comfortability.