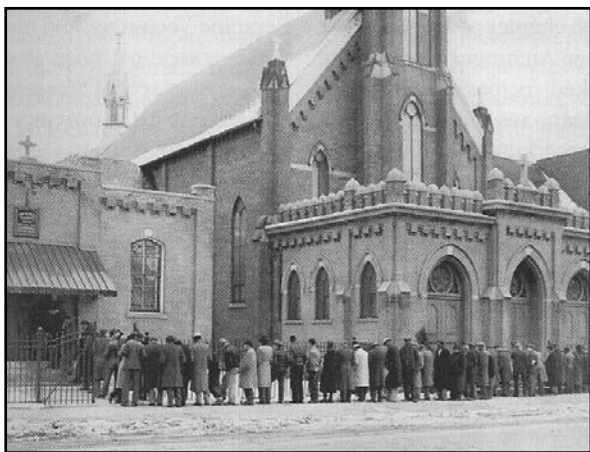


A Little Bit of History

Hard Times

By William Wicks, SFO, Historian

*Let us pause in life's pleasures and count its many tears,
While we all sup sorrow with the poor,
There's a song that will linger forever in our ears,
Oh, hard times come again no more.¹*
Stephen Foster - 1854



Soup Kitchen Lines - St. Bonaventure Church

Whatever words you use, or songs you sing, to define today's economy, most of us are getting by – some better than others. The lyrics above are from a Stephen Foster song written in 1854, but its popularity arose during, well, hard times. It was popular following the Civil War and the Great Depression. Somehow, it does not, as yet, seem appropriate today – at least to me. But, perhaps, it does to some.

Two events come to mind as I review the history of our Order - times when we responded to *hard times*. One event came in the form of a Franciscan Soup Kitchen; many Soup Kitchens that were sponsored by the Third Order, and assisted by the friar provinces, served the needy over the years, and continue today. They are truly a manifestation of our Charism.

A Soup Kitchen – “On November 1, 1930, the Third Order members of St. Bonaventure fraternity in Detroit, Michigan, opened a soup kitchen. This action was motivated by the spiritual director, Fr. Herman Buss, O.M. Cap., who was asked by his superior to respond to the need of those who were out of work due to the Depression. On the first day of operation, only nine people showed up, but by the end of the month the count

rose to 935.”² The Soup Kitchen continues today to serve the needy.

The second event was a Three Point Program sponsored by the national Third Order federation.

“The Three Point Program – The Three Point Program was introduced at the 1936 Quinquennial Congress held in Louisville. It reinforced the sense of true poverty that was appropriate during the time of the Great Depression. Briefly, in observance of the Three Point Program, Tertiaries were resolved:

1. To commit no sin in heart and hand for the sake of goods of fortune
2. To observe moderation in acquiring and enjoying goods of fortune
3. To share their goods of fortune with God and neighbor...”³

There are presently shelters and food banks all over the country that were initiated by Third Order members. Perhaps, not coincidentally, after I started writing this article, I received in the mail my weekly L. A. Diocesan newsletter, The Tidings. Under the title, *Will pope's social encyclical take root? Only time will tell*, there is a picture of an elderly man finishing “a meal at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, where hundreds of people receive free meals and groceries in Detroit. In his latest encyclical [*Caritas in Veritate*], Pope Benedict XVI is telling us ‘to not be me centered, but to be other centered.’”⁴ This is a timely message from our Pope to be embraced by all Franciscan. Let us pause in life's pleasures...

Watch the You Tube Video – For those of you who are touched by song, view (and listen to) the “You Tube” video referenced below. It's that good. Other renditions are by James Taylor and Yo Yo Ma, etc. on You Tube.



Friar, Tertiary and Fr. Solanus Casey

¹ Hard Times Come Again No More by Stephen Foster, 1854 – YouTube
Hard Times Nanci Griffen

² Wicks, William Wicks, History of the Secular Franciscan Order, Volume I, Barbo-Carlson Enterprises, 2007, 206

³ Ibid, 215

⁴ The Tidings – Southern California's Catholic Weekly, July 17, 2009, 4