



Muslim-Christian dialogue will move forward, despite recent setback

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue will still move forward in its efforts to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue despite the fact that top Muslim academics in Egypt suspended talks with the Vatican.

The head of the council, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, said he believed the boycott could be resolved and that he was still scheduled to meet in February with Muslim academics from Cairo.

The president of al-Azhar University in Cairo and members of the Islamic Research Academy announced Jan. 20 that they were freezing all dialogue with the Vatican to protest Pope Benedict XVI's remarks about anti-Christian violence in Egypt and the need to protect religious minorities there.

Cardinal Tauran told the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Jan. 29 that they were still trying to understand what compelled Cairo's Muslim academics to suspend dialogue. He said he believed "an attentive reading" of the pope's remarks would help clear up any misunderstanding.

"If we want to move forward with dialogue, one must first of all find the time to sit and talk face-to-face, not through the newspapers," he said.



Photo by William M. Slaven

A worker prepares soup at St. Joseph's House, Camden, an overnight drop-in café for homeless men and women who need to get out of the cold. The new facility opened its doors for the first time on Jan. 26.

A warm place to stay overnight

By Peter G. Sánchez

CAMDEN — On the first day, 20 came. Over the next two nights, 30 walked in from the cold.

On the fourth night, 40 came, filling the shelter to capacity.

The hungry and cold ate soup, bread, or crackers, or drank coffee, tea and water, while socializing, watching a movie or playing card games.

For some of them, the best part was just a place to keep warm, off the streets of Camden, from 9:30 p.m. to 6:30 a.m., seven nights a week.

On Wednesday, Jan. 26, Joseph's House Café started operating at 523 Stevens Street as a hospitable drop-in environment for homeless men and women who need safety, comfort and warmth during the night.

The initiative began after Msgr. Robert McDermott, pastor of the nearby St. Joseph's Pro-Cathedral,

wanted to do more for the homeless sleeping on the rectory porch or on the streets. After he brought together men and women in figuring out how to respond to the homeless' plight, St. Joseph's House Café was born.

Everyone involved emphasized the "team effort" that went into opening St. Joseph's.

Able to accommodate 40 guests a night, the program has two to four volunteers helping out each night, with a total of about 20 volunteers signed up for certain shifts.

A subsidiary of St. Joseph's Carpenter's Society, St. Joseph's House is located at the site of New Visions Homeless Day Shelter, in partnership with Lutheran Social Ministries, which currently operates a daytime drop-in center for the homeless.

The overnight shelter is meant to "treat (the homeless) like family,"

noted Bill Slaven, one of the founding board members and a diaconate candidate.

"They need physical, emotional, and spiritual support," said. "A touch of humanity."

John Klein, executive director of the program, agrees. "St. Joseph's House is a place where the homeless are provided with dignity and respect."

Klein also noted that the shelter is always looking for donations of warm clothing such as socks and blankets, which are given to the homeless, or monetary donations, to provide continued services.

To send a monetary donation, send checks to: St. Joseph's Carpenter's Society, Memo: St. Joseph's House, 20 Church Street, Camden, NJ 08105.

To donate clothing, or to volunteer at St. Joseph's House, call John Klein at 856-964-9777, ext. 606.