

Replica of Michelangelo's 'Pieta' **dedicated for St. Vincent de Paul clients**

[Kevin Theriault](#) | October 17, 2013 | [0 Comments](#)



Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted is on hand to dedicate an exact replica of Michelangelo's "Pieta" at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. (Kevin Theriault/CATHOLIC SUN)

The dining hall at St. Vincent de Paul on at 1075 W. Jackson St. serves 1,500 meals a day to those in need. This setting may be an unlikely place to experience the beauty of a great work of art, but collaboration between the Vatican Observatory, the Catholic Community Foundation and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has brought a replica of Michelangelo's "Pieta" to the facility.

The replica is an exact copy created using molds of the original sculpture, which were made in 1932. Former County Supervisor Fulton Brock began the effort to acquire a copy for the valley through a contact at the Vatican Observatory Foundation, which owns the exclusive rights to the molds.

The vision of Jim and Diane McGee and Gabrielle Chung, members of the Knights of Malta, helped bring the sculpture to the Virginia G. Piper Chapel at St. Vincent de Paul. They saw an opportunity to bring the Catholic Community together to reflect, pray and appreciate this work of art.

David Newren, president of Arte Divine said that their mission is to make these works of art available to people who may not have a chance to visit the original in the Vatican.

“What is often heard is that the most difficult part of being homeless is in not being seen, in becoming invisible,” said Steve Zabilski, executive director of St. Vincent de Paul in Phoenix. “For these people who feel broken, they can see Jesus and Mary when they were broken. They get to see something beautiful.”

Bishop Thomas J. Olmstead, on hand to dedicate and bless the sculpture Oct. 9, echoed these thoughts.

“For the people that come in here come with wounds, some of them very fresh, wondering if they can be healed, this will provide a great place for them to pray. This is where wounds are healed.”

An image of the Pieta was on the card distributed at the bishop’s inaugural Mass 40 years ago.

“I chose this image because I thought the world needed a symbol of hope. If there was any time when someone should have been in despair, it was in this moment.”

Catholic Community Foundation Board Member Steve Nelson agreed.

“We believe that many people will have a deeper connection with the Lord through this amazing work of art,” he said. “We want to help bring this kind of inspiration to the faith lives of the people of the Valley.”

The bishop said it was fitting that the statue could be found at St. Peter’s Basilica and St. Vincent de Paul. “This is very Catholic...and it is very beautiful,” he said.

A team from the Phoenix Art Museum helped to create an appropriate setting to install the Pieta in the chapel. Visitors can see it, experience it and touch it. The chapel is available during breakfast from 7-8:15 a.m., during lunch from 11 a.m.-1 p.m., and also to volunteers serving at St. Vincent de Paul throughout the day. Access can also be arranged by appointment by contacting Shannon Clancy, director of development for St. Vincent de Paul, (602) 261-6893.