



Sophie Grodsinsky

is a senior at Walsh Jesuit High School in Cuyahoga Falls. Sophie is currently the President of the National Honor Society, "opinions" editor of the school paper, and is a member of the Justice League. She spends time outdoors, rock climbing and running track. She plans to study chemical engineering. After college, she plans to volunteer for two years, then join the workforce in the environmental field.

Most people would agree that the beauty of our world is in the uniqueness of each individual and also the solidarity of belonging to the human race. Unfortunately, the blessing of diversity is oftentimes coupled with discrimination, which usually occurs "in a democracy [where] the majority of the citizens is capable of exercising the most cruel oppressions on the minority," as noted by Edmund Burke. While this statement may refer to differences of ethnicity, religion, gender, or even physical or mental capability, another such group that has suffered from humiliation and hatred for centuries is the homeless men, women, and children that line the streets of every city. These ordinary people who have found themselves in extraordinary circumstances deserve the same care, concern, and respect as those who have fortunately not suffered from insufficient minimum wages and faulty welfare.

The homeless have been a group discriminated against for years, but hopefully that will change once people recognize that living on the streets can never tarnish the basic human dignity that every person possesses. There are common misconceptions that the homeless are lazy, careless people who refuse to work, that they are dangerous drunkards and drug-users causing nothing but trouble, but worst of all that they do not deserve help because being destitute puts them below those who are not. Some see through these misconceptions, but do nothing to correct them. Edmund Burke warns about this passivity when saying, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." Through a program called The Labre Project at my high school, a weekly ministry mirrored after the life of St. Benedict Joseph Labre that feeds and befriends the local homeless, discrimination of the homeless has been drastically lowered both in my community and within my own family. After I spent a few Monday nights feeding and speaking with these homeless men and women, my parents were both worried and skeptical. Though open-minded and caring individuals themselves, they too shared the common misconceptions and feared for my safety. To alleviate their concerns, I invited them to accompany me and after only one night of Labre they chose to join me in my commitment to working for justice in the streets of Akron, Ohio. We have returned to Labre as a family and we now pray, bake, and sew for our friends from the streets to comfort and empower them. My grandparents were even more cynical of forming relationships with the homeless but also were converted by the ministry of caring for our sisters and brothers, each in their time of need.

By creating these types of ministries in cities across the nation, even across the world, discrimination against the homeless and the destitute could be combated by the promotion of solidarity and respect among all. Although these programs may start slowly or be ridiculed for naivete, they will develop into respected projects that the entire city will foster. Akron, Ohio, Cleveland, Ohio, and even Chicago, Illinois have all begun addressing homeless discrimination and hopefully many more will follow.