



Volume 25, Issue 12, December 2007



## 'Tis the Season

Noelle Daoudian

I have been hearing the phrase "'Tis the Season" all around, I think even more than in past years. As the song goes the season calls us to be jolly. When I hear the word "jolly" I think of being happy, cheerful, or in good spirits, and all of those things are good, as I would prefer to be around someone of that state of being rather than the opposite, but the main question is why are we to be jolly during this season. I think it depends on why you celebrate the season. For some, they are jolly because they spend time with family and friends and reflect on the year or years past. Others are jolly for the things they give and receive and maybe even the parties they get to attend. Although, those are all wonderful reasons to be jolly, I believe that the reason to not only be jolly, which is temporal, but rather joyous during this season, is because it marks the hope of reconciliation with God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

During our VORP board meeting we were just talking about how the ways of God are counter-cultural, even the way God decided to save us from our sins was through His son, Jesus, as a baby. Usually, a baby brings happiness to his/her parents and those around him/her. Jesus, whose birth we celebrate during this season brings joy to the whole world because He came to bring us into a right relationship with God. King David captures this idea well when he wrote: "I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praise to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. *My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you— I, whom you have redeemed*" (Ps. 71:22-23). Thus, as we are about restoring relationships at VORP, may we remember and be joyous about our relationship which has been restored through the birth of a tiny baby whom we celebrate during this season.



## Understanding Gained Through Mediation

Dorreen Roth

The offenders were young girls, who in the beginning seemed shy and embarrassed to participate in the program. We met with them and explained to them that it will help them to admit to the victims that they did indeed shoplift at their store. Learning that it is not simply a corporation they stole from would be a valuable lesson. The parents were disappointed in their daughters' behavior and very supportive of the mediation.

The store assistant managers who participated in the mediation were in their store at the time of the incident; it was perfect because they knew the story. We did two separate mediations because the father of one offender did not want the girls together; he felt they are just not a good combination. We encouraged him to see that both of the girls were not bad; they both had made a bad choice that particular day.

We followed the protocol of the introductions and reiterated the ground rules. The Offender was the first to tell her story, which seems to be a typical teenage story, at the mall hanging out with friends, saw some things in the store they wanted and then just took them. The first store manager to speak was excellent. He told her how he takes it very personal when someone comes into the store and steals. He said that he works there and spends more time in the store than at home. He said, "it feels like someone is coming into my home to steal, this is a slap in the face." He explained, the manager is responsible for the inventory and when it is missing it reflects badly on him and his chance to get a raise in pay is also affected. If he does not catch people stealing then he could be blamed by the corporation for stealing himself. The company policy is to just fire the entire staff if they cannot determine who is stealing. This is the reason that they prosecute all shoplifters; to show proof they are not the ones stealing. The second store manager confirmed what was said and mentioned that they try to make their store a fun environment where teenage customers feel welcome to come in and enjoy their time in the store. They do not hover over the customers; rather they give them freedom to enjoy the store. The offender was so surprised to hear how affected the managers are when someone steals from their store. She immediately apologized and said she would never do it again; she was upset and shed some tears. The managers both accepted her apology and stated they knew how hard it must be for her to sit in front of all these adults and take responsibility. We all told her how proud we are of her for being able to admit the injustice and to reconcile with the store. She told about her experience with her Community Service of 50 hours, which she had completed, with SPCA. She said it was an experience she will never forget. We explained she is now a leader in her community of friends and challenged her to go back and tell them what she learned and help other teenagers to make better choices and not shoplift. Her plans for the future are to go to college and she has goals. Her mother was asked if she had any questions or anything to add.

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*(Understanding Cont.)*

She said she was not aware how affected a store manager is when people steal from a store. She was happy for her daughter to hear about it. Earlier in the day she was told by her probation officer that they could cancel and not attend VORP, because she had completed her community service. However, they came anyway and the mother said she was glad that they came.

We asked the store managers if they wanted a follow-up meeting which they said that they did. The store manager said he thought this is such a good program and he wishes that all the shoplifters went through it and they would certainly participate in it again. The second offender's mediation went just about the same. She too was surprised to hear how the shoplifting affected the store managers. She apologized and told us about her community service experience and how this bad choice on that day has changed her. Her father was glad that she participated in the mediation and thought hearing from the managers would make her think the next time she is in the same situation at the mall with friends.

*Dorreen Roth is a student in the Peacemaking and Conflict Studies Master's Program at Fresno Pacific. In addition to VORP mediations, she currently works as a Civil Court mediator.*

**Volunteer Mediator Training**

January 11&12

February 8 & 9

Friday 6:30pm - 9:30pm

Saturday 8:30am - 3:30pm

Call 455-9803 to reserve a spot.

**VORP Staff**

Noelle Daoudian	Director
Johnny Phouthachack	Agreement Manager
Morgan Crawford	Case Manager
Norma Cabrera	Bookkeeper

**VORP Board Members**

Michael Blue, Chair	Arthur Wint
Dave Purvis, Secretary/Treasurer	José Chaparro
Ron Blalack	

**New Case Manager**

Greetings and salutations, my name is Morgan Crawford. I would like to start by first saying how excited and enthusiastic I am to be working with such a great organization as VORP. It is a great work to be able to help juvenile offenders' journey through reconciliation with those they are in conflict with. I believe this first is a great task, because it is a faithful life of a disciple of Christ to be a peacemaker. Another reason I believe in VORP is for the last three years I have managed a Group Home for male adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17. It is hard to see and hear of their lives, which have been in and out of the system for several years as a continual cycle of decay. I believe in the restorative qualities that VORP instills in those who go through it. I am currently attending FPU University as a social work major, and intend on pursuing my masters after graduating. I am actively involved in the social work club, and the multicultural club on campus. I am an alumna of FIFUL's pink house, which was a fantastic experience. I have also had the pleasure of working in Detroit with Campus Crusades Here's Life Inner City, helping out churches and working on issues of racial reconciliation in the community there. My favorite time of the whole experience was working at a day camp serving over 100 children, and being able to start a relationship with them, loving, learning and caring for them, while exposing them to the person of Christ. I am excited for the things I will learn; as well as being able to implement these principles wherever I find myself. I thank you for all that you do, and look forward to partnering with you in being peacemakers and disciples of Christ.

*\*Check out next month to meet our new Bookkeeper!*



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