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MAIN BLOG VIDEO

October 28, 2008

## Faith-based groups fight foreclosures

Posted: 09:36 AM ET

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**Chuck Afferbach**  
CNN San Francisco Producer

On stage at the parish hall, Rosario Frisse told the assembly to close their eyes and count to ten. The five hundred people packed into the auditorium—working class men and women, mothers holding babies, school kids doing homework—all did as she asked.

"In the time it took us to count to ten," Frisse said, "another family in America has lost their home."

Their concern showed on their faces, their demands were printed on the paper pennants they waved. Families First. 34% for Housing. Salve Su Casa, Spanish for Save Your Home.



The Monday night meeting had been organized by PICO National Network, a collection of religious congregations across the country tackling the foreclosure crisis on behalf of homeowners caught in the collapse. They came to Holy Rosary Parish in Antioch, California, a blue-collar suburb midway between San Francisco and Sacramento. This town has been hit hard; almost 8% of the homes here have been foreclosed...so far.

One by one the speakers came to the podium to tell their stories. Serefino Leon lost his Antioch home, only to see it sold at auction for half of what he had paid, at a price he could have afforded. Marian Youngblood was a loan officer in Kansas City, trained to falsify income amounts on applications. The borrowers would fall behind by the second loan payment. "As a Christian, it broke my heart," she said. So she quit.

Their demands were simple. A freeze on foreclosures. Rewrite loan agreements so families can stay in their homes. No mortgage should be more than 34% of the homeowner's income. Arlonda Pirtle, a real estate agent from Stockton, California, who lost her own home, had a message for the banks. "Now you have your bailout, so share the wealth."

On stage, representatives from county and state government listened to the testimony and pledged their support. The FDIC sent an emissary with a statement from Chairwoman Sheila Bair. Michael Gross from Bank of America stood up and said, "I think it was good for us to be here tonight, to see the faces of the families affected."

Also on stage were two empty chairs. The representative from Wells Fargo Bank cancelled at the last minute. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson sent his regrets that he couldn't attend.

Raul DeAnda announced that this rally was just the beginning.

"Secretary Paulson, if you are watching," he declared, "PICO is coming to Washington!"

That gave the standing-room-only crowd something to cheer.

"Si, se puede!" they chanted. "Yes we can!"

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Candy Crowley is CNN's senior political correspondent and an AC360<sup>o</sup> contributor 
- David Gergen**  
David Gergen is CNN's senior political analyst and former presidential advisor 
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Roland S. Martin is a nationally award-winning journalist and AC360<sup>o</sup> contributor 

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