

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting - June 21, 2017

Attendance: Mary Fong, Paul Chestnut, Chris Lundin, Ruth Chippendale, George Chippendale, Terry Atkinson

1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week
2. Approval of May minutes

The minutes were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

3. Synod Proposal

We reviewed the current situation with the Synod Proposal. The support for the synod proposal was very strong at the March 8 meeting of the PSC. All members except one seemed enthusiastic about the idea. Chris and Henry were directed to write a letter to the Bishop, in which they state that the PSC ask the Bishop to request the California Catholic Conference of Bishops to convene a conference consisting of bishops, clergy, and lay experts in order to study the issue of the death penalty in California. At the second meeting, on April 12, there was a complete turn-around. After a lengthy discussion, a vote was taken, and the result was 6-5 in favor of sending the recommendation to the Bishop. Fr. Matt introduced the "veto" option, which, it was said, required at least a two-thirds vote to overrule. At that point, Fr. Matt rejected the proposal and simply canceled it. Fr. Matt later sent instructions to the HCC to "modify and adjust" their proposal to be further considered by the PSC.

Henry expressed the opinion that part of the source of negative attitude (about abolition of the death penalty) might be attributed to the Catholic Catechism, Section 2267. A careful reading of this section shows it does not prohibit the death penalty, absolutely. Moreover, some proponents of the death penalty cite this section (i.e., allowing for it in rare cases) as support of their position. So there is a problem within the ranks of the church, and it should be addressed. The church should not be a source of the problem. A synod could address the issue of a change to the catechism.

Finally, we decided not to proceed with plans for the synod for the following reasons:

- 1) Fr. Matt's commentary on the proposal indicates that he prefers that we present a more scholarly work, that is, with references, etc., to back up our statements. That approach might be appropriate for a formal paper, but that is not our objective here.
- 2) We are disappointed that Fr. Matt is not more enthusiastic about the idea. It seems to us that our work will not bear fruit if the pastor of our parish thinks that this effort is a waste of time.
- 3) We believe that the basis of rejection was inappropriate.
- 4) The additional work to bring the proposal to a form that would garner Fr. Matt's approval is significant, and we fear that this additional work will ultimately have no value.

Paul volunteered to write an email message to Fr. Matt to convey this conclusion, and to

communicate it to the group.

4. Death Penalty

5. Books for SESS - accounting for 2017

Over \$700 remaining in church account from the money collected for books for second graders. This money will be used for next year's group of students.

6. \$4,359 SVdP donations received for people in need in Palo Alto.

Donations in the amount of \$4,359 were received by the St. Vincent dePaul Society from parish collections in May. Changes were made in the services that we provide for people in need who come to the Pastoral Center each Monday and Wednesday. The number of people has been increasing, and our resources are limited.

NEW BUSINESS

7. June is Torture Awareness Month

The banners ("Torture Is Wrong") have been up for the month of June.

8. Crop Hunger Walk - October 8

As we did last year, the Parish has created a team for the CROP Hunger Walk, which is a "walk for charity" that raises money to help eradicate hunger throughout the world. We will be joining teams sponsored by many churches throughout the Mid Peninsula. The walk is sponsored by community and interfaith efforts within Church World Service, a cooperative ministry of 37 Christian denominations and communions. Currently, well over 2,000 communities across the U.S. join in more than 1,300 CROP Hunger Walks each year. More than five million CROP Hunger Walkers have participated in more than 36,000 CROP Hunger Walks in the last two decades alone. The local walk will take place on Sunday, October 8, starting at Nealon Park in Menlo Park. Walkers have the choice of completing a one-mile, three-mile, or five-mile walk. Registration starts at 1:00 pm; walks start at 2:00. We have created a team, the St. Thomas Aquinas Team, that will participate in the event and raise funds to enhance food security. We will also have fun; there will be bands, food, games, and a silent auction.

9. Help Send A Kid To CYO Summer Camp

Through the generous support of St. Thomas Aquinas parishioners as well CYO Camp Alumni, 30 kids will experience the outdoors this summer. CYO Summer Camp can have a huge impact on young people, helping them discover their potential and self-confidence. To learn more about the project, visit sendakidtocycocamp.com.

10. What's On Your Mind?

11. Volunteer for Faith-sharing/Question of the Week

Next meeting - July 19, 2017

