

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting - August 4, 2018

Attendance: Paul Chestnut, Mary Fong, Chris Lundin, Terry McCaffrey, Henry Organ, Fr. Stasys Mikalonis, Fr. John Hurley

#### 1. Introduction of Guests

Paul introduced Fr. Hurley, who is the Vicar of Evangelization in the San Jose Diocese. Paul had talked to him on the telephone when he called to inquire about the Catholic LGBT Ministry Council, and invited him to our Human Concerns Committee meeting.

#### 2. Approval of June minutes

The Minutes were approved.

#### 3. Office for Family Life and Spirituality

Fr. Hurley discussed his plans for the Office for Family Life and Spirituality. He passed out a chart that shows the structure of the Department of Evangelization. "Family Life" is one component of the Department, and LGBT Ministry falls in that component. He will be forming an advisory council, which will include a parent of a gay person. He will be promoting other initiatives under this umbrella.

He told us that the web sites are out of date, and that the Catholic LGBT Ministry Council has not met for a few years. He has been given the task of re-assessing the various ministries in the spirit of "Joy of the Gospel" per Pope Francis. There will be an umbrella group called "Family Life and Spirituality," to look at these ministries through new lenses.

While Fr. Hurley was talking, Fr. Stasys arrived; he had been invited to our meeting also.

#### OLD BUSINESS

#### 4. Welcome banners

When the subject of welcome banners was brought up, there was a lengthy discussion. Our attitude, developed over the past year or so, is that we believe that the parish should be more visibly active in its welcoming of everyone, and in particular, the LGBT Community.

We are concerned that the LGBT community feels unwelcome. In the spirit of Fr. James Martin's book, "Building a Bridge," and following the lead of the diocese, we want to create a more welcoming atmosphere at our three churches. How do we go about doing that? An

example of change on the ground is St. Paul Church in Lexington, Kentucky. That church is discussed in an article in NCR: “Parish roundup: ministry for people with disabilities; a welcome for LGBTQ Catholics,” by Peter Feuerherd, July 11, 2018. See: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/parish/parish-roundup-ministry-people-disabilities-welcome-lgbtq-catholics>. “St. Paul’s Church in Lexington, Kentucky, welcomes LGBTQ Catholics with a gay rights banner. The symbolic outreach has generated positive comments from parishioners.” Here is a picture of the banner:



St. Paul Catholic Church in Lexington has had a sign outside of its church this month welcoming LGBTQ+ members.

Fr. Hurley pointed out that this welcoming banner would lead to unintended consequences. Various other special interest groups within the parish would want to have their own welcoming banner.

At this point, Fr. Stasys chimed in with a similar opinion. He criticized me for asking Fr. Hurley if he could help us in our goal to welcome the LGBT community. He criticized me, and by implication, our whole committee, for not coming to him about this issue. At this point, Henry said that our group had a plan to bring the issue to the attention of the Parish Council and to the pastor, who had just recently been initiated as Pastor. Fr. Stasys said he wanted to wait for the incoming bishop to see if he has any ideas. Chris asked why our parish had to wait to make any changes, since both the pastor and likely the Bishop will be moved on before most parishioners. Fr. Stasys said that a welcoming banner which was not specific to any group would be OK. [This last point was not borne out because Chris Lundin put it on the PSC agenda for September 19 but Fr. Stasys asked that it be removed, as we had agreed (?) to postpone the issue.]

In the past, our committee has pressed for initiatives that are controversial, and we were rejected because they were controversial, so Chris asked, “What if we made the statement, ‘the death penalty is inadmissible’?” the point being that 1) the Pope has recently officially changed church teaching, stating the “the death penalty is inadmissible,” and 2) the pastor would be unlikely to allow such a discussion because we all know that there are many parishioners who favor the death penalty, and he would not want to deal with the reaction.

At this point, Fr. Stasys said that he had to go to another meeting, and Fr. Hurley said that he also needed to go. The meeting continued.

#### 5. Death Penalty news

Terry discussed plans for a Death Penalty initiative. He said that Death Penalty Focus has decided not to place an initiative before the voters until 2024. The Legislature could initiate a plan. He also said that Deanery 2 is having a conversation about the death penalty.

#### 6. Letter to District Attorney Rosen

We did not discuss this topic.

#### 7. PSC meeting highlights - July 11

Chris said that the Parish Council is having a discussion about the Parish Strategic Plan. A theme is: groups are not doing what they are supposed to be doing.

#### 8. STA construction: Pursuing diversity in awarding contracts

We did not discuss this topic.

#### NEW BUSINESS

#### 9. Peaceful Presence events - 8/11 and 9/11

We did not discuss this topic.

#### 10. 2018 Crop Hunger Walk

The 2018 San Francisco Peninsula’s annual CROP Hunger Walk is scheduled for Sunday, October 7, 1 PM, at Nealon Park in Menlo Park. Terry Atkinson has volunteered to work on the publicity.

## 11. What's On Your Mind?

Next meeting - September 28, 2018