

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting - June 23, 2018

Attendance: Paul Chestnut, Mary Fong, Terry McCaffrey, Chris Lundin, Henry Organ

1. Approval of May minutes

The minutes were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

2. SESS CYO camp scholarships

Twenty-seven St. Elizabeth Seton students will be able to attend CYO Summer camp in Occidental this summer thanks to the incredibly generous donations made by members of the St. Thomas Aquinas Parish. Altogether, the St. Thomas Aquinas Parish community contributed \$6,280 to the Send a Kid to CYO Camp Fund. Gwenn Connolly said, "On behalf of the students, their parents and everyone at the Send a Kid to CYO Camp Fund we send our deepest thanks and appreciation."

3. Books for SESS second graders

Carmel Caligaris, the Director of Advancement at St. Elizabeth Seton School expressed thanks for the books for the Second Graders. The students were gifted with some wonderful books during the last week of school. Each child was given the opportunity to come with a wish list of four books that she would like to read over the summer vacation. All the books were then purchased, carefully bundled, and beautifully tied with each child's name in place. The Principal, Ms. Rosa, distributed the gift packages that created a lot of excitement on that particular day.

4. LGBT discussion

For several months, we have discussed how our parish should reach out to LGBT Catholics in our parish. The topic has gained currency because of the book by Fr. James Martin: *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity*. This book has made it clear that the church can do more to welcome LGBT Catholics into the community. The book describes the problem very well, and has some prescriptions for building a bridge between the church and the LGBT community. His ideas have been put into practice in many Catholic parishes, but thus far, we have not been able to make contact with this community.

So our group is striving to find out if there are Catholics among the LGBT community in Palo Alto who do not feel welcome in our parish, and if so, perhaps they need outreach on our part. We queried the person identified with the LGBT web site at St. Julie Billiart, but we received a reply from Fr. Saju Joseph, the pastor there, who advised us to speak to Fr. Matt. We sent a message to Fr. Matt, who said that he has not had any contact. We believe that we have a responsibility to make an attempt at outreach. We desire to make contact, but so far we have been unable to do so.

5. Death Penalty news

In our parish, Larry Sullivan prays to abolish the death penalty at the Thomas Merton Mass (8:45).

There will be a meeting of the California People of Faith Working Against the Death Penalty on August 27 at 7 pm at the Thomas House.

Terry passed out copies of articles from the New York Times about death Penalty issues. One of the articles referred to Kevin Cooper who was railroaded into prison for three savage murders that he did not commit (for a long column by Nicholas Kristoff that appeared in the NYT, see: (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/05/17/opinion/sunday/kevin-cooper-california-death-row.html>))

There is a "National Catholic pledge to end the death penalty,"
"All Christians and people of good will are thus called today to fight not only for the abolition of the death penalty, whether legal or illegal, and in all its forms, but also in order to improve prison conditions, with respect for the human dignity of the people deprived of their freedom" - Pope Francis. See the eBulletin this week, and also: catholicismobilizing.org/pledge.

6. Immigration issues

Rallies to protest the separation of families at the southern border will take place on June 30 all over the country. One rally will be held at the corner of El Camino and Embarcadero Roads from 12:00 to 1:00 pm. Another will be held at the Mountain View Civic Center Plaza at 7 pm.

Update: There will be a Prayer Vigil for Immigration Reform and For the Dignity of Migrant Families at the San Jose Cathedral on Tuesday, July 17.

NEW BUSINESS

7. 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. St. Thomas Parish will have a team. Paul will send out invitations to join by email. A new feature: GroupRaise will be used for raising funds; see www.groupraise.com.

8. What's On Your Mind?

Next meeting - August 4, 2018

Fr. John Hurley, the Vicar of Evangelization for the Diocese, has been invited to the August 4 meeting.