

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting - May 26, 2018

Attendance: Paul Chestnut, Terry Atkinson, Anne Fillin, Chris Lundin, Henry Organ

1. Approval of April minutes

The minutes were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

2. SESS CYO camp scholarships

At this point, 16 donors have contributed \$4500 to help SESS students to attend the CYO camp the summer. The drive concludes on June 3 at the Masses at St. Thomas.

3. Hotel de Zink

The Peninsula Bible Church will host Hotel de Zink in the month of August. We do not know yet whether we will provide dinners for two weeks in August. We will continue to provide dinners for two weeks in April.

4. LGBT issues

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.

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 have found some writing on the Diocesan web site about LGBT ministry, such as, <https://www.dsj.org/cultural-ministries/catholic-lgbt-ministry-council/>, <https://www.dsj.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Catholic-LGBT-Council-Brochure-2017.pdf>, and <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/homosexuality/always-our->

children.cfm

However, we have the impression that these sites are out of date.

So we are not making traction. We don't know whether we/the Catholic Church have sufficiently scared away any LGBT parishioners, or who, like divorced and remarried Catholics, they're just flying under the radar and quietly attending Mass, or not. 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

Paul reviewed some items in the May issue of Death Penalty Focus:

- Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nicholas Kristof lays out the case for Kevin Cooper's innocence, and calls on California Governor Jerry Brown to grant a reprieve and convene an innocence investigation.
- The U.S. Supreme Court recently decided that 83-year-old Walter Leroy Moody wasn't too old to be executed.
- The U.S. Supreme Court agreed to review the case of Russell Bucklew, who suffers from cavernous hemangioma, a rare medical condition that causes blood-filled tumors in his head, throat, and lips.
- For the first time in New Hampshire, a Republican-controlled Senate and House voted to repeal its death penalty, only to face a veto threat from the Republican governor.
- Vicente Benavides walked out of San Quentin State Prison late last month, the first prisoner in recent memory to walk off California's death row. In 1993, Benavides, now 68, was convicted of sexually assaulting and killing 21-month old Consuelo Verdugo, and was sentenced to death, but in March, the California Supreme Court found that that evidence of sexual assault was "false, extensive, pervasive, and impactful," and overturned his conviction. On April 19, Benavides walked out of San Quentin after 25 years on death row for a crime he didn't commit.

6. Immigration issues

We continue to watch the fluctuating immigration situation with the erratic administration in Washington, and we are wondering what we can do to address the problems.

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. We decided to participate again this year.

NEW BUSINESS

8. Books for SESS second graders

Books for second graders at SESS will be distributed on June 6. \$700 from last year's collection will be applied.

9. What's On Your Mind?

Henry: We should appeal to Gov. Brown to commute sentences prior to his departure in January.

Next meeting - June 23, 2018, 2 pm at OLR