

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting - October 16, 2013

Attendance:

Paul Chestnut, Mary Fong, Chris Lundin, Laura Chiu, Susan Olsen

1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week

2. Approval of September minutes

The minutes were approved, with changes.

OLD BUSINESS

3. St. Vincent de Paul

The Palo Alto St. Vincent de Paul ran out of money recently. They received an infusion of funds from the collection last week. The money was spent very quickly because the needs are great. Big swings in cash on hand are typical. They reduced the number of days on which they are open to two.

4. PSC meeting news - Mary

Deacon Jamie Gutierrez was assigned to our parish. Sarah Landers was hired as an assistant to the Youth Ministry Director. Bev and Neale Wade will assist Fr. Peter with RCIA.

The STA chair lift plan for the Thomas House is shelved - The City of Palo Alto deemed the plan insufficient to grant a permit.

St. Thomas interior will undergo a renovation, and will be closed for two months after Christmas. Alternative sites are being arranged for each activity.

On December 15, Auxiliary Bishop Daley of San Jose will celebrate a Mass at OLR.

5. Social Justice Day

We discussed the concept of "Social Justice Day." This would be a single day filled with social justice activities, such as speakers and workshops. It would be a Deanery-wide event, location undetermined. Workshops in both Spanish and English would be offered. Such an event was held for seven years in Deanery 7 at Holy Family Parish. Susan Olsen was the chair. The idea of the day is to reach people who aren't already involved in Social Justice (though most people who attend have been very committed). It is an opportunity to infuse new energy into parish social justice groups. Susan is willing to chair the event, and she would seek the support and assistance of others who have worked in the past. She would also seek the help of a whole new group of participants.

A target day of March 15, the second Saturday in Lent, was set. A small committee of about seven members will be required, plus many additional volunteers for specific tasks, such as lunch for attendees. Susan will put out feelers to her connections in Deanery 7.

NEW BUSINESS

6. Review of Human Trafficking discussion September 24

Guest speaker: Sister Caritas Foster

As part of the Tuesday Evening Spirituality series, Sister Caritas Foster led a discussion of human trafficking within our own country and around the globe. Human Trafficking is defined as recruiting, harboring, transporting, buying or selling a person through force, fraud or coercion — physical or psychological — to exploit the person for forced labor, sexual exploitation, or both. It is estimated that annually 27 million persons are trafficked globally: 80% are women and children. Human trafficking is the fastest growing

criminal activity throughout the world.

Sister Caritas Foster is a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family. She has served in a leadership capacity within her religious community and currently serves on the Board of Directors for MISSEY, a local organization that serves sexually exploited youth.

The talk was very good. A lesson is that suspicious circumstances in our town should be reported. Two numbers are: Department of Health and Human Services NATIONAL HOTLINE: 888-373-7888; Department of Justice Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force Complaint Line: 888-428-7581

For specific information about how to recognize these situations, see: http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/united_states_of_america/helplines

7. Advent Recycle Collection

The Green Committee of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish will be hosting an Advent Recycle Collection to benefit The Opportunity Center/Shelter Network which serves many needs of people in our greater community. We know from their Community Outreach Coordinator that backpacks, sleeping bags and rolling luggage are always in demand. The Green Committee will be the lead and HCC will support. The plan is to start the collection immediately, instead of waiting until Advent. The collection will last until November 17. The place of collection will be the parish office (we need to get agreement from the office). In addition, we will hold the collection for four Sundays (October 17, November 3, 10, and 17) at the OLR Hall after the 10:30 Mass. The items will be stored in a room at the Dermody Center. Laura will draft bulletins and posters.

8. Multifaith Voices for Peace and Justice meeting October 22

MVPJ will hold a 10-year anniversary meeting on October 22. "We want to take this 10--year anniversary to reflect on our actions, the effect we've had on our community and the world, and to think and pray about what we're called to do next. We ask community social justice faith leaders to join us for this review." Tuesday, October 22, 2013, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m., First Congregational Church of Palo Alto.

9. Measure D on the November ballot

We took note of a measure on the November ballot that is about low-income senior housing. The City Council of Palo Alto adopted an ordinance to change the zoning of a location near Arastradero Road to allow the building of 60 affordable senior housing units and twelve market-rate single family homes. Measure D asks the voters to approve or reject the ordinance. The main reason that the ordinance has many opponents is that the project will increase the density in the neighborhood and hence increase traffic.

10. What's On Your Mind?

Mary: Fr. Matt asked HCC to look into the Gabriel Project -- a new program of the Diocese of San Jose. Through the Gabriel Project, pregnant mothers who feel alone or afraid are embraced as a daughter, sister, and friend. Volunteer mentors are trained by this Diocesan program to walk a mother through her pregnancy, and local community resources are enlisted to help empower the mother to care for her unborn baby. No mother should feel alone at such a critical time in her life. Through this personal contact and care, our Catholic community is able to bring the hope and love of Christ to any pregnant mother experiencing a crisis situation. If the Gabriel Project speaks to your heart, come learn how you can be a part of this life affirming Diocesan program.

SAVE THE DATE! The Gabriel Project Info Night: Tuesday, November 5th at 7:00pm at Holy Spirit Parish 1200 Redmond Ave, San Jose. Childcare provided. For more information, Contact: Aimee Plata at gabrielproject@dsj.org or (408) 429-0386

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

Next meeting - November 20

