

## Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting - February 16, 2016

### Attendance:

Mary Fong, Paul Chestnut, Chris Lundin, Ruth Chippendale, George Chippendale, Terry Atkinson, Terry McCaffrey, Henry Organ

### 1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week

Mary led us in a prayer.

### 2. Approval of January minutes

The minutes were approved.

### OLD BUSINESS

### 3. Death Penalty News - Synod Proposal

Henry Organ attended the meeting to discuss his proposal for a synod on the death penalty. The summary of his proposal: "A statewide synod on the death penalty could be an effective platform to examine and resolve the disparities and inconsistencies on the subject among Catholics in California as 'Faithful Citizens.'"

An initiative was placed on the ballot in 2012 (Proposition 34) to abolish the death penalty, and it failed. Two competing initiatives were placed on the ballot in 2016: one to replace the death penalty with life without the possibility of parole (Proposition 62), and it failed; the other initiative sought to mend, but not end, the death penalty (Proposition 66). Proposition 66 narrowly passed by 1 percent, and is being challenged in the court.

Henry's point is: a synod could result in:

- a better understanding of the history of the church's teaching
- a greater insight into why recent Popes have called for the end of the death penalty
- a more rigorous examination of personal judgment on the issue.

It is a good time for an examination of the issue because Pope Francis has repeatedly called for the total abolition of the death penalty.

A critical issue is that there is a critical mass in Southern California, and a significant shift in the Catholic vote will bring about a change in the outcome of any future initiative.

A major factor in the perseverance of Catholic votes in favor of the death penalty is the Catholic Catechism, in the form of Section 2267. This section leaves room for uncertainty in the church's position, whereas current church thinking on the matter leaves no room for uncertainty. The Pope himself has come out strongly against the death penalty.

There will be a meeting of the Pastoral Council on March 8 at which this concept will be

discussed, and the council will consider writing to the bishop to recommend the convening of a synod.

#### 4. Books for SESS

New Books for Summer Reading for St. Elizabeth Seton School second graders will be collected from March 11 through March 19, 2017 after each Mass. A package of five to seven books has been provided in past years for each student to keep and enjoy at home during valuable summer weeks out of school.

#### 5. Women's shelter

The Heart and Home Collaborative, a women's night shelter at University Lutheran church in Palo Alto, will be open only until end of February. A group (Terry, Mary, and Paul) purchased some food on February 3 and provided a dinner that night at the shelter. Donations of \$135 from various friends had been collected for the purpose. Left over cash will be used at a subsequent dinner. The shelter will close for the year on February 26.

#### NEW BUSINESS

#### 6. Muslim/Catholic convocation - January 16

More than 300 people including 35 parishioners joined Bishop Patrick McGrath and many others on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday at the Saba Center in San Jose for the Muslim-Catholic Community Event of Support and Friendship. This will be the first of a number of meetings to express mutual understanding, support and friendship between the Muslims and Catholics.

#### 7. Multifaith Service of Concern and Commitment - January 19

#### 8. What's On Your Mind?

Ruth: She will appeal for volunteers to bring food to Hotel de Zink on March 5.

#### 9. Volunteer for Faith-sharing/Question of the Week

Mary volunteered.

Next meeting - March 15, 2017