

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting -- February 28, 2012

Attendance:

Paul Chestnut, Laura Chiu, George Chippendale, Pru Delameter, Roberta Uebbing

1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week

We welcomed an old but newly active member, Pru Delameter.

OLD BUSINESS

2. Approval of January minutes

The January minutes were unavailable.

3. Our Congolese Refugees

Paul described the latest problem with the refugees. The grandmother, Agnes, has received SSI (Supplemental Security Income) payments. Last May, the family was using Agnes's checking account as a convenient way to move money around. The regulations are that SSI recipients cannot own significant assets. When a person obtains benefits, she is told that if there is any change in their situation, she must inform the SSA. The asset threshold is \$2000. If the recipient has more than \$2000 in the bank, then she is technically ineligible. They are not rigid with this rule. In Agnes's case, she was over the limit from May to November of 2011. As of November 1, her account showed more than \$5000. Agnes had been sent a letter stating that she is no longer eligible for SSI benefits; also, she has to pay them \$5950, which is the amount she was paid while she was ineligible. Agnes and Emmanuel had an appointment with the Social Security Administration on January 26. The lady that we talked to on that day listened to Emmanuel about the situation, explained that she would consider his case, and would respond within two weeks. Meanwhile she told Emmanuel that he should find out what has happened in the account since November 1. If the account has dipped below \$2000, he should find out where the money went. He should produce proof of any statement about where the money went, in terms of a bill or check. He said he would do that.

We went immediately to his bank and asked for statements for October, November, and December. They were produced quickly, as well as a statement about the current balance. There were several withdrawals in November, and the final balance was about \$1000. The current balance was below that.

We went to his house and created a spreadsheet that showed the withdrawals and what they were for. He brought that to the SSA the next day. He hoped that the kind lady will reinstate the SSI payments and not require them to make up the \$5950. They did reinstate the monthly payments, but they did not rescind the requirement to pay back the \$5950.

Nancy Ng has been working on getting Chantal into Notre Dame High School in San Jose.

Laura discussed the funds remaining from the collection we took up last August to pay for the deposit on the house at 830 Sherman Oaks. The required deposit was \$4000, and we collected almost \$6000. The remainder has been spent on uniforms for the Chantal, clothes, diapers, utilities. There is \$487 left.

#### 4. Death Penalty issues: SAFE California initiative results

The SAFE campaign delivered 799,589 signatures. That assures that the SAFE Initiative will be on the November ballot. Our parish delivered 240 signatures.

#### 5. St. Vincent DePaul Palo Alto - Roberta

Roberta Uebbing discussed the problem of the food packages that are provided to the St. Vincent DePaul clients. Over the last few years, the clientele had evolved from families to mostly homeless people. The nature of the food items must also change. Instead of the conventional packaged foods that we have always contributed, the people need "portable food." That means flip tops containers of soups, chili, ravioli, canned fruit, fruit cups with jello, tuna, vienna sausage, granola bars, and madeleine (a dessert). She asked our help in getting the parishioners to make the conversion.

#### NEW BUSINESS

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

George: There was a PIA meeting about an action in support of stopping deportations and the splitting of families. There are plans for another meeting on March 17 from 2:00 to 3:30. They want to get Spanish speakers active in going to the police brass.

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

Next meeting - March 20, 2012