

Saint Thomas Aquinas Social Justice Committee
Meeting Notes, September 5, 2023 6:00 p.m. (St. Catherine Room)

Present: Chris Rehmann, Dave Dirks, Jean Dirks, Chuck Glatz, Francis Today, Marianne Today, Paula Friederich, Fr. Kyle Digmann, Ann Gansemer-Topf

Action Items Highlighted

Opening Prayer: Provided by Fr. Kyle

Minutes of August 1: Approved by email

Business

Fr. Kyle requested the opportunity to meet with the Social Justice Committee to review our current activities. He would like to discuss whether there are ways to improve our efforts. The items that were discussed are summarized below.

Racism Discussion Activities:

In their Pastoral Letter, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops suggest that annual homilies to address the issue of racism are important. This would be a logical follow-up activity to racism discussions held earlier this year. Also, there will be a speaker on the ISU campus in October who has been accused of racism and sexism, so a homily discussing Catholic Social Teaching on racism would be timely. Francis suggested that the Sunday readings on the weekend of October 28 & 29 may fit well with this type of homily. Fr. Kyle will review and reflect on this suggestion.

There was additional discussion about how society views racism. Younger people are looking for leadership on the issue, which includes education to help individuals understand the privileges they may have due to their race. Chuck will share a video of Fr. Brian Massengale discussing racism in the Catholic Church.

Love Your Neighbor Program:

Fr. Kyle asked if there is a need for more Love Your Neighbor interviewers. Jean has gotten additional help in the last year, and the number of interviews has been reduced due to funding limitations. However, added help would be good, especially if there is a way to reduce the amount of work required of Elizabeth. She prepares information for the interviews, including data from Good Neighbor. Assistance for her may be valuable.

Currently there are only six interviews per week, but, on average, there are 20 requests for the six spots. Jean stated that more funding would be helpful. Fr. Kyle suggested making a request to the Pastoral Council to increase the tithe for the next fiscal year. Jean will make that request, and Fr. Kyle will add this to the Pastoral Council agenda later this year. He also said that the Stewardship Committee will be preparing an "impact report" to illustrate the effect of

Parish programs such as Love Your Neighbor. Jean is also planning a Ministry Spotlight on LYN on the weekend of October 28 & 29.

Martha's House of Hope:

We discussed how STA may be able to help provide items needed by moms and infants at Martha's House of Hope. This would be similar to the Christmas clothing collection that used to be held for Birthright. Since we are not sure what is needed, it was decided that STA volunteers from the home should take the lead in organizing the collection.

Food at First:

This discussion centered on how to get more people to volunteer with preparing and serving meals. Getting small groups to volunteer together is probably the least intimidating way to get people involved. Marianne is willing to work with Aurelia (Campus Ministry) to show her how to sign up small groups to help with meals or the market. There also should be more information provided to parishioners about STA involvement in Food at First. Jean suggested this could be included in the Ministry Spotlight in October. STA is committed to cooking a meal on the 4th Monday of each month, and STA member Bernadette Wood is the head chef on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month. Our efforts should focus on providing volunteers to help cook and serve these meals.

CRS Rice Bowls:

Fr. Kyle asked for help with the Rice Bowl collection in Lent next year. Assistance is needed with advertising, putting out the rice bowls, and collecting them. Marianne and Paula will work with Faith Formation to coordinate this effort, including who will take the lead in ordering the rice bowls.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be on **October 3, at 6 p.m. at St. Thomas Aquinas.**

Respectfully submitted by Francis Today.

Minutes Approved: October 3, 2023