

Parish Social Ministry Program Centers Work on Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Seeks to Respond in Love in an Increasingly Polarized Society

Parish Social Ministry (PSM) is the one Catholic Charities program that directly focuses on Catholic Social Teaching and how those principles find expression in parish life. And one of the primary principles of Catholic Social Teaching is the Life and Dignity of the Human Person from conception until natural death.

Our PSM program is actively engaged in the work of Life and Dignity. Besides me, PSM program members include Richard DeBona, PSM Coordinator in the Mankato Deanery, and Nicole Henrichs, PSM Coordinator in the Worthington Deanery.



In the current state of our polarized society, it is difficult to find common ground on a wide variety of issues related to the Life and Dignity of the Human Person. But Jesus' call to love our neighbor as ourselves, challenges us to enter into this often heated dialogue with love.

Being engaged in politics is one of my least favorite activities, but I have found that, when I connect with my representatives and senators, they are human just like everyone else. Entering the relationship with respect, honesty, and civility keeps me from demonizing those whose views differ from mine. I strive to charitably let my lawmakers know when we disagree even as I affirm them when we agree. Without that underlying relationship, I cannot influence change in this realm.

One of my roles has been to coordinate *Catholics at the Capitol* for our diocese on Tuesday, February 19th. At this writing more than 171 people have signed up to be trained in advocacy and are committed to meeting with their elected officials in the afternoon. It is great to see so many people willing to engage Life and Dignity in the political arena.

In September 2017, Pope Francis began a two year campaign called *Share the Journey* with a goal of working for justice for immigrants and refugees. In our diocese we offered the retreat *Companions on the Journey* which was developed by Lisa Kremer who runs the *Dream Catcher* program for immigrant children in the Worthington area. *Companions on the Journey* gathered Hispanics and Anglos who were able to get acquainted, to share their stories, and to put human faces on the issue of immigration.

It is true that our system is broken, despite the fact that we are a nation of immigrants. To help fix our broken system, our program promoted a petition drive throughout the parishes in our diocese on Migration Sunday, January 6, 2019 the Feast of the Epiphany. Many parishioners signed petitions sent to our federal lawmakers asking for comprehensive immigration reform and justice for immigrants and refugees throughout our nation.

I have spoken often on the topic of immigration with mixed results. This is currently a very polarizing issue in our society, but I stand on solid ground when I speak, because the Catholic Church supports justice for immigrants and refugees.

Life and Dignity covers the full realm of human experience including protection of the child in the womb, combating poverty, overcoming racism, promoting justice for immigrants, peacemaking, end of life issues, and much more.

Recently I did a day of reflection on Life and Dignity at Pax Christi Parish in Rochester. It was great to engage the 25 people present on this topic that are committed to making this world a better place. I will be doing this same reflection at St. Joseph Parish in Owatonna on Saturday, March 23rd and on a future undetermined date at St. Mary's Parish in Winona. Our PSM team hopes to present this reflection day within all deaneries of our Diocese during Lent and beyond.

Our PSM program recently released a Bible study on *Life and Dignity of the Human Person*, the second in a series following the first Bible study, *The Sevens Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*. This Bible study is an opportunity for small groups to discuss the issues of Life and Dignity and does not require a scripture scholar to lead it. The Bible study is provided free of charge.

The PSM program will continue to engage Life and Dignity issues in a variety of formats and venues. In Matthew we hear: "Amen I say to you, whatever you do to the least of brothers (sisters) of mine you do to me." (Matthew 25 – 40) It is our Gospel call to go and do the same. For more information about the work of Parish Social Ministry call me at 507-454-2270 ext 246 or email me at tparlin@ccsomin.org.

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