

Social Justice Commission Welcome Packet

We gather together each week at St. Therese Parish because we seek Christ's path. We yearn for justice, truth, wisdom and love. We are surrounded by contradictions and conflict along the way. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the problems around us.

We need good companions for this journey, a community of conviction to help us persevere, to maintain the sense of urgency without losing sight of the relevance of our call as Christians.

This is the work of the Social Justice Commission, the Sister Parish Ministry, the Homelessness Ministry, the Conversations on Race Book Group. Please read more about the work of the Social Justice Commission and contact any of the Commissioners to ask questions, get involved and work for justice with your fellow St. Therese parishioners.

The Social Justice Commission – History and Mission

St. Therese Parish has a long and committed history of working for justice. Probably one of the most pivotal times for St. Therese was in the late 1960s when parishioners experienced racial discrimination within the parish, as well as in the community and across the country. Parishioners at St. Therese went to the Diocese to seek help in resolving the discrimination and racial injustice experienced at our parish. The positive outcome of that effort has inspired the parish ever since to continue its commitment to justice.

As dialogue in the parish increased between people of different races and backgrounds, they grew more committed to each other and to working together for justice in the world. St. Therese was inspired in the 1980s to respond to several international crises: St. Therese parishioners helped to integrate Cambodian refugees to Seattle by assisting them with locating housing, jobs, basic necessities and welcoming them to St. Therese. Responding to a call from Archbishop Hunthausen to become informed about the needs of people fleeing oppression in Central America, St. Therese also provided Sanctuary to a family from El Salvador and a family from Guatemala during the 1980s. This was a powerful act of faith that left a lasting impression on the parish.

When Fr. Paul Magnano became Pastor in 1998, he solidified the works of justice happening in the parish by calling forward parishioners to form the Social Justice Commission. The Commission is a body of 12 parishioners, serving 2 year terms, and one staff member who are inspired to nurture our community's fire and passion for justice.

The Social Justice Commission exists to act as leaven for the St. Therese Parish in becoming a more just community and a community for justice. Our role includes the following intentions:

- *To recognize and encourage existing justice efforts*
- *To inspire commitment to Gospel values and Catholic Social Teaching*
- *To challenge norms and assumptions*
- *To raise questions, surface interest, and educate on issues of justice*
- *To present opportunities for Christian action*
- *To gather communities for justice*

Since the Commission has been in existence, we have called on the parish to focus on a commitment to nonviolence through education, prayer, dialogue and action. The Commission has invited the parish to make an annual vow of nonviolence and has offered opportunities to learn and discuss issues of nonviolence.

We have challenged the parish to become more aware of environmental justice and to learn how our faith calls us to be stewards of all of creation. In collaboration with the Sister Parish Ministry, we have introduced shade grown, fair trade coffee that St. Therese now serves at the coffee hours after mass.

The Commission has called the parish to look to our brothers and sisters in Iraq and learn how the economic sanctions and military actions affect the people of that country. The Commission continues to provide opportunities for parishioners to learn about the issues involving the United States' relationship with Iraq and to respond in meaningful ways. We have responded with education, prayer, political action and solidarity with the people of Iraq.

Social Justice Commission contact information

The Social Justice Commission meets the fourth Wednesday of every month in the Parish Center. Parishioners are welcome to bring new ideas/discussions to the Commission from 8:30 pm to 9 pm each month.