



Holy Spirit Catholic Church Social Ministry Newsletter

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

MAY, 2011

Committed to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching

JRLC: 2011 DAY ON THE HILL

Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

1. Life and dignity of the human person
2. Call to family, community, and participation
3. Rights and responsibilities
4. Option for the poor and vulnerable
5. The dignity of work and the rights of workers
6. Solidarity
7. Care for God's creation

Dates to Remember

JUNE

- 2 Social Justice Commission
- 24 Friday Assistance

JULY

- 4-10 IHN host week
- 7 SJ Commission
- 22 Friday Assistance

AUGUST

- 4 SJ Commission
- 26 Friday Assistance

On Feb. 17th, over 30 people from the Rochester area, 11 of them from Holy Spirit Parish, joined a group of 850 from every legislative district in Minnesota to converge on the capitol.

We started at the St. Paul RiverCenter where JRLC leaders (representatives of the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, & Muslim faiths) briefed us on 3 key issues to discuss with our legislators: [1] preserve an impartial judiciary, [2] save the safety net, and [3] promote a solution to our budget crisis that includes raising revenues in a fair manner (without expanding gambling which has its own social toll.) *Shared sacrifice* was a major theme.

We then regrouped in the Capitol Rotunda, prayed together, and dispersed to meet our own legislators to communicate these goals directly.

As Catholics we are called to speak for those who have no voice, and JRLC gives us a great opportunity each year to do so. Give some thought to joining us next year.



Key Issues ~ 2011 Day on the Hill

Three vital issues for participants to discuss with their state legislators were identified by the JRLC leaders, who are Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and Muslims. Key portions of the briefings on these issues are summarized below:

[1] Save the Safety Net: "My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings..." (Isaiah 32:18)

Background: Our state's budget troubles are serious ~ but not so severe that we can justify stripping away survival-level support from disabled and ill adults and make things tougher on poor families with young children. Income assistance programs are not fast-growing areas of the budget. Our MN Family Investment Program (MFIP) welfare-to-work program outlays are actually declining, and General Assistance is forecast to increase by less than one percent for the next biennium.

JRLC Position: Human dignity requires us to stop balancing budgets on the backs of our poorest neighbors. We cannot be a good people and push more and more people into homelessness and crises. Whole communities suffer when we are so calloused toward people with illness, disability, and limited ability to earn a decent income.

Bottom Line: Stop ripping holes in the safety net for disabled and ill parents and children. The Governor is already proposing painful cuts that put an unfair
(Continued on p.2)

Key Issues from JRLC, continued

burden on people who can least afford to balance the budget. Will the Legislature make even further cuts and remove entire portions of the social safety net? We cannot afford more homelessness, people in crisis, and young children growing up in unstable situations.

2] Budget and Taxes: "... every budget is a moral document, and taxes the price of civilization ..."

Background: Minnesota's budget crisis is due largely to an insufficiency of revenue.

Total state-local revenue as a percent of total personal income has gradually declined over time. (Source: MN Price of Government Index, maintained by MN Management and Budget)

MN is now below the national average in state general expenditures. (Source: Report by Ernst & Young and the Council on State Taxation)

Causes? Large, permanent tax cuts in the late 1990s which benefited mostly top-end households, followed by a no-taxes approach to balancing budgets and a chronic reliance on one-time money, endowments, and reserves, federal stimulus dollars, and loans from schools and local governments.

Does MN have a fair tax system? Current effective tax rates are:

10.1% of annual income for the top 10% of households,

12.8% of annual income for the middle 10% of households, and

11% of annual income for households with only \$15,000 annual income.

(Source: the most recent issue of the biennial Tax Incidence Report published by the MN Department of Revenue)

Is MN an uncompetitive, high-tax state?

MN now ranks 16th in state and local taxes as a percent of personal income.

Considering business taxes as a share of private sector gross state produce, MN ranked among the 16 lowest-taxing states in the nation in fiscal year 2009.

No state has cut more tax revenue than MN since 2002.

(Source: Report by Ernst & Young and the Council on State Taxation)

JRLC Position: MN's revenue system should be marked by 2 features:

Sufficient revenue is raised to fund social infrastructure, education, and basic human needs, and

Revenue is raised fairly, i.e., based on ability to pay.

Tax increases are needed to fund public services and make our state-local tax system more progressive.

Bottom Line:

Raise revenue to avoid painful cuts to health care, safety net, and human service programs.

Options: [1] restoration of income tax rates, [2] an income tax surcharge, and [3] careful expansion of sales tax base.

Do not be seduced by gambling. The social costs of raising revenue through increased gambling are much higher than the value of the revenue raised, by a 3-to-1 margin.

[3] Impartial Judiciary: "Able people, such as fear God, lovers of truth, who hate a bribe ..."

Background: Following federal court decisions (the US Supreme Court's *White* decision in 2002 and the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals related decisions in 2005), MN judicial candidates are now able to:

Announce their views of legal and political issues

Announce their party affiliations

Seek, accept, and use party endorsements

Address party gatherings such as conventions

Directly ask for campaign contributions to groups of 20 or more.

Therefore, MN will experience highly partisan races and escalating fundraising to influence judicial election outcomes like those already seen in other states. This trend will be intensified by the US Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision in 2010 that permits corporations to fund electoral campaigns directly.

JRLC Position: JRLC recommends that the state constitution be amended to allow for merit selection, public performance evaluations, and retention elections for district court and appellate judges.

Bottom Line: Urge legislators to move legislation forward to preserve MN's impartial courts so the constitutional amendment question can appear on the ballot in 2012.



AN INSIDE LOOK AT CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

In 1995, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*, produced by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, identified 7 key social justice themes:

- Life and dignity of the human person
- Call to family, community, and participation
- Rights and responsibilities
- Option for the poor and vulnerable
- The dignity of work and the rights of workers
- Solidarity
- Care for God's creation

Theme 5

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

In a marketplace where too often the quarterly bottom line takes precedence over the rights of workers, we believe that the economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative. Respecting these rights promotes an economy that protects human life, defends human rights, and advances the well-being of all.¹

The U.S. bishops discussed in their pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, the imbalance of power that a free market economy can give employers over employees in bargaining of labor contracts. “Such unequal power may press workers into a choice between an inadequate wage and no wage at all”, or other hard and unfair conditions.²

The Catholic tradition supports the rights of workers to form unions for the purpose of giving them a voice in their workplace and contributing to the good of workers. Krier goes on to state, “As a major social institution, unions have obligations to the society and must not only serve their own narrow self-interests. Unions must act in ways that benefit and empower workers and contribute to the common good.”³

Question to ponder: How do I view the right of workers to organize and form unions in the private sector, and in the public sector?

References

1. USCCB, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*, 1998
2. Marvin L. Krier Mich, *The Challenge and Spirituality of Catholic Social Teaching* (Louisville, KY: JustFaith, 2005), page 137.
3. Ibid. page 146.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

***Justice for Immigrants:
The Theology of Migration and
Framing the Message***

***Friday, September 30, 2011
St. John's University***

***Saturday, October 1, 2011
St. Catherine University***

***Keynote Speaker
Reverend Daniel Groody, C.S.C.***

***For more information:
<http://www.osjspm.org/default.aspx>***

Fr. Groody, an associate professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, has written on migration, globalization and theology. He is also the producer of documentary films including “One Border, One Body: Immigration and the Eucharist,” and “Dying to Live: A Migrant's Journey.”

“When we look at the experience of migrants today,” he said recently, “we see that they are hungry in their homeland, thirsty when they cross the desert, naked after having been robbed even of their clothing, imprisoned in detention centers, sick in hospitals, and then, if they make it across, treated as strangers. I think one of the most powerful ways we can be Catholic is to be hospitable to those who are most vulnerable.”

Committed to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching

Holy Spirit Catholic Church
 5455 50th Ave. NW
 Rochester, MN 55901
 Phone: 507-280-0638
 E-mail: hspirit@holyspiritrochester.org

WE'RE ON THE WEB

WWW.HOLYSPIRITROCHESTER.ORG

SUNDAY NOON LUNCH PROGRAM

Did you know that a person in need in the Rochester area can get a hot lunch every day of the week?

For many years the Salvation Army has served hot lunches Monday through Friday. However, there wasn't anywhere for people to go on the weekends, so when Christ United Methodist Church began a Saturday lunch program, it became apparent that something was needed on Sunday as well. After all, Sunday's the day, that families (sometimes extended families,) traditionally gather to celebrate and share a dinner together. It's often a time to catch up with each other and enjoy each other's company.

So . . . What to do about Sunday? The answer came from Rochester's Catholic community. The six parishes in the city of Rochester banded together with the goal of offering a hot lunch on Sunday. Each parish contributes monetarily and the Church of St. Francis generously offers the use of McCarthy Hall and their kitchen. Then each parish takes its turn preparing and serving the meal - Holy Spirit has this responsibility about every six weeks. Volunteers do all the work - they contribute desserts, do the cooking, serve the meal, and clean up afterward. But, most importantly, they

spend time sharing the meal and visiting with our guests.

Why do people come? There are many reasons. Quite a few live alone. One gentleman told me "I don't eat so well since my wife died. Somehow the food tastes better when I've got someone to eat with." Another said "I don't know how to cook and it's the only time all day that I see another friendly face." Most are on limited incomes, and unfortunately, a few are homeless. One guest, rushing in as we were about to leave, had just gotten into town. He'd spread out his sleeping bag when someone told him about the lunch program and he came right over. He was so grateful - it was the first food he'd had in two days. These are the people we do it for and why the effort is so worthwhile. Our guests are so appreciative.

If you and/or your family would like to be involved in this program, contact Marcia Hartmann at 775-7684 or matah51@aim.com. It's a great experience for young people - it helps to give them an appreciation for how fortunate they are.

***"From a faith perspective,
 I have learned that those who suffer the most deserve the greatest hearing,
 even though, ironically,
 their voices are often the last to be heard, if at all."***

Rev. Daniel Groody, C.S.C.