

Dear Parishioner,

Our Parish Social Justice team has talked and listened to over 300 parishioners in the past 8 months to deeply understand what pressures are experienced by St. Thomas More families. We then compiled a Parish Agenda and presented it at the Parish Assembly in November. All of these issues truly reflect the social teaching of the Church. It is our hope to have all parishioners "sign up" on the agenda.

Your signature indicates your agreement that these are important issues which you support. Gaining as many signatures as possible will show strength and solidarity and serve as an organizing tool as we work to address these issues impacting families. Your signature will be added to other parishioners' names who are working to make a difference. Rest assured your name will not be used for any other purpose outside our parish or given to any outside organization.

Please take some time to read the agenda and sign your support below. You can drop the form in the collection basket next week at mass, mail it back to the parish office, or leave it with a Social Justice committee member after mass this weekend.

In Christ,

Msgr. Elmer Holtman
Pastor, St. Thomas More

St. Thomas More Parish Agenda

The St. Thomas More Community is part of the Body of Christ and thus recognizes the interconnectedness of all persons. Further, this creates an obligation to create peaceful and just communities both within our parish and in the surrounding community. We will, therefore, use our energies to build the structures necessary to challenge the mindset of indifference and the injustices of our time.

The Church's Social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. With these teachings as our guide and through ongoing conversations, we choose to devote our energies and attention over the next three years in the following areas:

Building a Relational Culture

Believing that St. Thomas More Parish is a network of supportive relationships that help us grow spiritually and act powerfully in the world, we will build the avenues that:

1. enable neighbors to know and support one another by conducting voluntary Neighborhood Walks to meet our neighbors,
2. create a culture of conversation within the parish where parishioners can share their concerns and have the capacity to act on those concerns by holding monthly Conversation Groups,
3. improve communication and conversation among and between parish ministries by working with the parish communication director and heads of ministries,
4. participate in larger, ecumenical efforts that seek to address social justice issues through membership in Austin Interfaith and other appropriate state and national organizations.

Health Care

All people have a right to adequate health care as we are all created in the image of God. Access to affordable health care should be within the reach of all persons. Fair, and reasonable health care should be available in a way that makes it possible for health care providers to practice and patients to receive health care regardless of income level, stage of life, or current health condition. Recognizing the complexity of these issues we will research this issue seeking perspectives of health care providers, insurance providers, hospital administrators, patients, and other pertinent stakeholders. We also will share this research with other churches engaged in this issue to develop a strategy for action.

Education

We believe as a church we should support both Catholic and Public education. We believe that all teachers should be respected, supported and compensated as professionals. Without sacrificing high standards, we want to shift the focus of the educational system away from an overemphasis on standardized testing and toward a renewed emphasis on critical thinking, reasoning and problem solving for all students.

Further, we are concerned about what often seem as excessive time devoted to excessively high expectations in the fields of competitive sports, arts, and performances.

To achieve these efforts in the most fair and effective way, we will build strong working relationships among school personnel and our members/parents to achieve a balance of priorities. We will conduct meetings with principals and school board members to begin developing these relationships.

Elderly/Disabled Care

The most vulnerable among us need support and care. We want adequate resources in the larger community that provide the services that make it possible

for the disabled and elderly to live quality lives. As a parish, we can come together to facilitate support groups, to exchange ideas, to ask questions, and to support care-givers, as we lessen the sense of isolation among this population. We can network with and become advocates for those community and societal organizations that make our parish efforts more effective.

Economic Realities

Families and individuals of all income levels are experiencing economic pressure. In many settings an imbalance of economic power creates insecurity, hardship, and isolation. Globalization, for example, contributes to the growing insecurity that jobs will be outsourced and even where there are important social benefits from this movement many are displaced and disenfranchised. We believe the economy must serve the people, not the other way around. People have the right to decent and fair wages for basic necessities; work hours, which preserve family life, and social safety nets to protect families from the hardships of unemployment, illness, separations and divorce. The Church stands with all people for reasonable working conditions and job security. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities – to one another, to our families, and to the larger society. We will learn about workforce and economic strategies that lift people out of poverty. We will then conduct workshops about economic and business policies and practices that impact our families.

YES! I support the St. Thomas More Parish Agenda.

note: INFO will NOT be shared outside of STM

NAME:

ADDRESS:

ZIP CODE _____

HOME PHONE: _____

DATE OF

BIRTH _____

EMAIL

ADDRESS: _____

