



The Seed

The Commission

The Diocesan Social Justice Commission was formed in November of 2010. Fr. Jim Dixon, S.J., Coordinator for the Peace and Justice Office, the Diocesan Office for Pastoral Councils, along with a Lay Ecclesial Ministry student finishing her Masters at Catholic Theological Union worked together to form the Commission. By the end of November, a Charter Document had been developed for the Commission. The Charter defined the vision and mission of the Commission. The vision of those involved was that the Commission would serve as a primary resource for social justice in the Diocese of Gary. The mission statement which is below, is a statement of identity and direction that describes the present and the future. It essentially says

what the Commission is trying to do.

The membership of the Commission includes 13 lay men and women from different parishes, 3 Diocesan staff members, and a 1 Deacon.

In October of 2011, the Heartland Center closed, and Fr. Jim Dixon, S.J., who directed the work of the Center, retired. After his retirement the work of the Office for Peace/Social Justice was moved to the Commission. In order to facilitate the work of that office, the Commission became a working Commission, with members being assigned to committees. The Committees are:

1. Parish Training.
2. Catholic Relief Service programs: Rice Bowl, Fair Trade, and

Diocesan Haiti Project.

3. Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). The chair works with both local and diocesan grants.
4. Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) works with local and state issues.
5. Immigration: Working with state and national issues.
6. Ministering Together—a collaboration with the local parishes, titled the “Box Program.

The Commission membership is open to any parishioner who would like to participate in the work of Social Justice in our diocese. For additional information, call Anne Verbeke at 219-769-9292.

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Diocesan Peace/Social Justice Commission is to work and operate within Catholic teachings to aid the parishes in addressing the dignity and rights of people who are socially, politically, or economically disadvantaged. In this regard, we will challenge parishes to attain a peaceful dimension in ministry in order to achieve both charitable and systemic progress in relationships locally, nationally, and globally.

US Bishops Call for Action in Response to Newtown Tragedy

In the Bishops 2000 document **“Responsibility, Rehabilitation and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice,”** they write, “As bishops, we support measures that control the sale and use of firearms and make them safer—especially efforts that prevent their unsupervised use by children or anyone other than the owner—and we reiterate our call for sensible regulation of handguns.” Following the shooting in Newton, the Bishop’s Conference called for “greater support for mental health services and for the entertainment industry to re-examine its glorifica-

tion of violence and how it preys on the “insecurities and immaturity of our young people.” In their document **“The International Arms Trade”(2006),** they emphasize the importance of enacting concrete controls on handguns and light weapons. The document calls on every nation and state “to impose strict control on the sale of handguns and small arms.”

The bishops of the United States reiterate what they wrote in **“Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration”** urging people to challenge the culture of violence by

1. Supporting measures that control the sale and use of firearms.
2. Supporting measures that make guns safer.
3. Calling for sensible regulations of handguns.
4. Support legislation that seeks to protect society from access to deadly weapons including assault weapons.
5. Make a commitment to confront the pervasive role of addiction and mental illness in crime.

Reflection Corner—Talking Points

1. Reflect on Mt: 5:4-9 & Mt:19:14.
2. ***Blessed John Paul II’s call for Catholics to build a culture of life to counter a culture of death.***
3. Culture of death is perpetuated by violence. The culture of life by contrast affirms the dignity of all human life and assures that it is protected from conception to nat-

ural death.

4. Enhancing the dignity of life includes helping to heal and care for those who have mental illness. Our society needs to provide health services and support to those who have mental illness.
5. How can our parish be actively

involved in supporting the culture of life in its totality? How can our Pastoral Councils and Peace and Social Justice Commissions use these talking points with the parishioners?

For additional information on this topic go to the USCCB website and select the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development.

Resources Available

- Pastoral Statement, **“Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice”**, (2000).
- Pastoral Statement, **“Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action.”**, (1994)
- **“Assault Weapons Backgrounder”** (Feb. 2005).
- National Association of School Psychologists, **“Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers”**.

Sandi Morgan, Diocesan Peace and Social Justice Commission Chair

Staff: Anne Verbeke, Office of Pastoral Council—219-769-9292, Adeline Torres, Office of Hispanic Ministry—219-397-2125.