



PILGRIMAGE TO OUR PAST

Celebrating 225 Years of Parishioners for Others

July 2019

A Commitment to Service

“Social Justice links my faith with concrete actions in my everyday world. It restores hope and unity where there is despair and division. I have also had the privilege of working and creating a real community with many parishioners and other great organizations.”

—Jeanne Rossomme

Holy Trinity’s Social Justice activities were formerly launched in the early 1970s when Rev. Thomas Gavigan, S.J. was pastor. The initial efforts were aimed at reaching out to those in the parish who were older and/or isolated. Six or seven parishioners and Fr. Gavigan discussed how the parish could be more involved with the pressing concerns of the day like homelessness, aging, access to health care, spirituality, education and finances.

The group’s inspiration came, in part, from the Jesuit mission of “service of faith of which the promotion of Justice is an absolute requirement.” In the early 80s, Rev. James English, S.J. further expanded the parish’s social justice efforts when he encouraged parishioners to provide direct service to DC residents in need, learning from the experts of the day: Rev. Horace McKenna, S.J. of So Others Might Eat (SOME), John Steinbruck of Luther Place, Dr. Veronica Maz of the House of Ruth, and Sean O’Malley, OFM of the Spanish Catholic Center.

The 100-member Social Concerns Group (elevated to a committee of the Parish Council under Rev. James Connor, S.J.) volunteered and joined the boards of soup kitchens, shelters, health clinics and numerous other organizations (including Georgetown Ministry Center). When SOME began its Provide-a-Meal Program, Holy Trinity was the first parish to sign up.

During this time, Holy Trinity also began a special collection, twice a year, specifically for Social Concerns efforts and began a parish-wide biannual collection (spring and fall) of clothing, shoes, coats, blankets, furniture and other items for distribution to those in need. The parish also joined with St. Aloysius, our DC Jesuit sister parish, to create North Capitol Neighborhood Housing Development, which built or renovated, in collaboration with Hands on Housing, affordable housing for sale to lower-income families.

In 1984, the Social Justice Tithe Program was established



under Fr. Connor. The program set aside 10% of ordinary income for Social Justice efforts.

In the early 1990s, parishioners and Rev. James Maier, S.J. traveled to a Jesuit parish in El Salvador, Maria Madre de los Pobres, to begin an international sister parish relationship.

In the late 90s, Rev. Lawrence Madden, S.J. agreed support building efforts at our sister parishes by including their needs in Holy Trinity’s Capital Campaign to renovate the Parish Center and the Chapel of St. Ignatius. St. Aloysius and Holy Redeemer received funds for affordable housing in DC and Maria Madre received funds for building a church. Additionally, showers were included as part of Holy Trinity’s renovations so the parish could host homeless persons during parts of the year.

Throughout this time period, the Social Concerns Group (now the Social Justice Committee) began to refine how it made grants from proceeds of the parish tithe and began to learn about and become involved in advocacy, urged on by Rev. William Byron, S.J.

In 2001, the parish became a covenant church of Bread for the World, an advocacy organization working to end hunger by 2030. Parishioners began to lobby and write letters to their federal representatives, demanding justice for the poor and hungry of the U.S. and the world.

Moved by the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina, the parish engaged in a two-year effort to assist the poor and newly homeless of Bay St. Louis, MS with food, clothing, donations, education, health care, accompaniment and hands

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on rebuilding efforts. During this period, parishioners repaired roofs and rewired more than 45 homes in the bay, working side-by-side with volunteers from across the country.

In the early 2000s, the parish employed its first Social Justice minister and launched its first “homegrown” advocacy organization—Good Faith Communities Coalition, an interfaith homeless advocacy effort aimed at changing how DC recognized and addressed its growing homeless populations. At the same time, Holy Trinity began participating in a rotating hypothermia shelter, housing 10 guests for two weeks during the Christmas season. Also, during the early 2000s, parishioners, moved by the recent tragedies in Haiti, began a third sister parish relationship with St. Jean Baptiste in Ains d’Hainault, Haiti.

During the most recent Capital Campaign (“Building on Tradition” which began in 2013), the parish again agreed to incorporate the needs of those in need by setting aside \$250k for affordable housing in DC and outreach to homeless families and persons in recovery. In 2018, Holy Trinity awarded those funds to Housing Up to renovate 12 units, changing them from transitional housing into permanent supportive housing.

In 2012, Holy Trinity began a day of service, the Power of One, in which parishioners volunteered at one of the many social service organizations in the DC area to learn about how they operate and possibly build a longer-term relationship. This effort continues, and many parishioners have

found a new place to volunteer their talents or have learned from those they help. This past May’s Power of One had almost 250 parishioners in action!

Several parishioners who experienced volunteering at Georgetown Ministry Center (GMC) during a Power of One began two weekly meals (Saturday and Sunday evenings) for the homeless. They had noticed that the men and women who came to GMC had access to hot meals during the week, but not on the weekend. They joined with four other parishes in Georgetown to begin a rotating, weekly Saturday supper at Mt. Zion United Methodist Church. That meal then expanded into a Sunday dinner run by Holy Trinity and hosted at Georgetown Presbyterian Church.

In an effort to engage more parishioners in service and advocacy, the Social Justice Committee began a set of lecture/action seminars called “Building Your Toolbox for Justice,” wherein knowledgeable speakers provide input and attendees discuss how they can and will get involved in issues of justice facing our DC community.

This awareness-raising effort led to the creation of a refugee committee in 2015 that worked with Lutheran Social Services and Jesuit Refugee Services to accompany a Syrian family for two years as they transitioned to living in DC. That group, in turn, has expanded to focus on ways to accompany asylum seekers and undocumented men and women already living in our community. Members of this group have traveled to the US/Mexico border in Nogales with the Jesuit ministry, Kino

Border Initiative, several times and assisted Sr. Norma Pimentel’s efforts in McAllen, Texas through Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley to provide hospitality to migrants recently released from detention. They have also spent time on Capitol Hill advocating for more humane refugee and immigration laws.

Over the years, a relatively small number of Holy Trinity parishioners, working in harmony with our parish priests, have committed themselves to seeing that justice is practiced in our city, country and world. They have learned about, stimulated, developed and sponsored many of the programs and projects which we all consider a part of the web we call Church.

Among these are: outreach to elderly and poor parishioners, SOME Sunday service, Georgetown Ministries, clothing, furniture and food collections, parish tithe, building, renovation and fund raising for affordable housing, Toy Sunday, Giving Tree, Good Faith Communities Coalition, a winter shelter, Power of One, monthly service opportunities, sister parish relationships with DC, El Salvador and Haitian communities, multiple lecture and learning sessions on housing, food justice, preserving our mother earth, racial equality, educational disparities through the Gavigan scholarship at Holy Trinity School and scholarships at the other three tuition-free Catholic middle schools in DC, refugee and asylum seeker accompaniment, advocacy around affordable housing and immigration/refugee issues, and weekly suppers for the homeless.

Given these and many other Social Justice programs and efforts over the years is there any doubt why so many parishioners feel thankful to be members of Holy Trinity Church because of its care for the other?

Contributors to this history include: John Hisle, Julie Aaron, Paul McElligott, Mary Tschudy, Jean Johnson, Bob Vollinger, Ron Castaldi, Charlotte Mahoney and Ann Friedman.

Parishioner Reflections

Being Present in Anse d'Hainault

What do you think of when I say Haiti? Devastating earthquakes, catastrophic hurricanes, dire poverty, corrupt government? Yes, these conditions exist, and in part, are what drew me to visit.

I joined members of Holy Trinity's St. Jean Baptiste Haiti Committee in February of 2017 on a trip to our sister parish. Getting past the poverty and the pollution in Port-au-Prince, where we landed, is not easy. One little boy, wearing broken sandals, carrying little more than a satchel, and a gloomy face, broke my heart. I burst into tears and thought, how can I help if I react like this?

We take a small mission plane from Port-au-Prince to Jeremie and then travel four hours in a pickup truck to Anse d'Hainault. The landscape becomes rough, rugged, rural...and beautiful.

Next morning, after a 5am Mass, we are invited into the home of the head of

the coffee bean growers alliance to meet his wife and his newborn baby. Later that afternoon at the Rectory, some of us sit on the dirt floor of the kitchen with the cooks, choking back the charcoal smoke that is cooking our dinner. We are shelling peanuts together, laughing, searching for common words, a common humanity. Towards evening, two mothers of girls who are Holy Trinity scholarship recipients arrive at the Rectory with homemade donuts, still warm, as a thank you for the opportunity for their daughters. They had seen us at Mass in the morning.

In just a day, Port-au-Prince slips away, and Haiti now has a face of individuals: mothers, fathers, babies, students, priest, workers.

Turns out, I wasn't there to help—I was in Anse d'Hainault to be present.

Present in Mass, present in visiting the coffee bean farms, present in visiting

the chapels in Pere Medard's parish, present in visiting the classrooms, present in playing hopscotch with the kids as their parents use the mill. Simply present.

We are present and we are listening and committed to taking the word of the Anse d'Hainault community back to Holy Trinity and finding ways to transform those simple needs into realities; installing wells, providing sewing machines, building computer classrooms, rebuilding church roofs, jump-starting a local coffee business...just to name a few.

Being present is transformational. And is the most important gift that you can share. Is that Social Justice? I don't know, but I feel more authentic, and that I have permission to be there.

—Kathleen Kaye

Finding Friendships in Haiti

I've enjoyed participating in many of Holy Trinity's social justice activities. As a former Maryknoll lay missionary, helping with our sister parish in Haiti is a natural fit for me.

I love many things about this work. Haiti is a very poor country, so there is a great need for our presence.

On our visits, we see that the projects we have helped with are making a difference in peoples' lives. I enjoy bringing people to Haiti because many people here have a negative impression of Haiti.

When they visit, they see that much of the country is very beautiful, especially the rural area where our sister parish is, and they learn about Haiti's rich culture and proud history.

I think the best part of this work, though, is the friendships I've made in Haiti, at Holy Trinity and at other parishes that have sister parishes in Haiti.

I'm inspired by our Haitian friends' faith, resilience and appreciation for



life and by the generosity of Holy Trinity's parishioners and others who help with this work.

—Kittie Fitzgerald



Brother Francis C. Schroen, S.J. (1857-1924)

Born of Catholic parents in Bolivian, Francis Schroen immigrated to Baltimore as an infant. After school, he opted to pursue his passion for painting instead of becoming a tailor like his father. Francis worked as a house painter and earned a reputation as skilled decorator especially in plastics.

After the death of his wife and two of his children, Francis applied for admission as a Jesuit lay brother. He continued his decorative work as a member of the Jesuit order and became one of the most noted church decorators and painters of his time.

Brother Schroen painted Holy Trinity Church in 1880, and again in 1920.

According to Fr. Kelly's 1943 history, "The walls were painted in tints of corea stone with bands and mosaics in gold. Scripture texts were painted in large letters above the frieze along the side walls...For the side walls of the sanctuary, Brother painted first on the Gospel side a copy of the masterpiece of our Lord's apparition to St. Ignatius at La Sorta, when the saint was on his way to seek the approval of Pope Paul III for the foundation of his order. On the Epistle side, he painted the apparition of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary. The painting was a gift of the nuns of the Georgetown Visitation Monastery."

The grand re-opening of the church was celebrated September 14, 1922.

Brother Schroen's talents were also utilized at Georgetown University, Fordham, and Boston College, in the Cathedral of Kingston, Jamaica, and in the Church of the Holy Name in New Orleans.

While his artwork did not survive later renovations of Holy Trinity, visitors to Georgetown University's Gaston Hall, Hirst Reading Room, Carroll Parlor and Healy Hall can still see his original work.

Brother Schroen is buried in the Jesuit Community Cemetery on campus.



(Clockwise, from top left): Brother Francis Schroen; Holy Trinity Church; Carroll Parlor, Georgetown University; Church of the Holy Name, New Orleans. Sources: www.library.georgetown.edu; The Search for Freedom, and Freedom Found: The Life and Art of Brother Francis C. Schroen by Virginia M. Keeler to the School for Continuing Education, Georgetown University, 1989.