

LIVING OUR FAITH at St Philip Neri

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Community & Common Good. Welcome to the third issue of *Living Our Faith*, a periodic publication of the St. Philip Neri Peace & Justice Commission. Each issue will focus on a different aspect of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and share ways our community is carrying the values of our faith into the world around us. This issue highlights a major theme in CST, that of *Community and Common Good*. On the back page of this issue, you will learn more about how our parish is working for the common good at the local level through the Metropolitan Alliance for the Common Good (MACG) and globally through the promotion and sale of Fair Trade products.

In Catholic social thought, the common good is not simply the sum of individual goods. It is not the sum of the good of the greatest number of people. That approach presumes that some people will, realistically, be left out or excluded from the benefits of social advance – and accepts that fact.

Instead, Catholic social thought emphasizes and insists upon the participation of *each and every person* in the common good. It stands in challenging contrast to many contemporary cultures' heightened individualism.

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. . . . This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"
(John 13:34)

The common good is the total of all those conditions of social living – economic, political, sociological and cultural – which make it possible for women and men readily and fully to achieve the perfection of their humanity. Individual rights are always experienced within the context of promotion of the common good. Human beings grow and achieve fulfillment only in community.

Catholic social thought's vision of promoting the common good requires developing in society all those conditions of social living through which each and every person can be enabled to more fully achieve their authentic human development. How we organize our society directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.

This Catholic social mission is carried forward by ordinary people who join unions, neighborhood organizations, business groups, civic associations, or other groups working for justice and peace.

"This mission is the task of countless Christians living their faith without much fanfare or recognition, who are quietly building a better society by their choices and actions day by day. They protect human life, defend those who are poor, seek the common good, work for peace, and promote human dignity. Working for justice in everyday life is not easy. There are complex and sometimes difficult challenges encountered by women and men as they try to live their faith in the world. We applaud the efforts of all Catholics to live the Gospel by pursuing justice and peace in their everyday choices and commitments."

- *Everyday Christianity*,
US Conference of Catholic Bishops

At the local and national level, promoting community and the common good requires creating employment for all, caring for the less privileged, and providing for the future. Our parish has a powerful tool through which to do this work in the *Metropolitan Alliance for the Common Good*.

At the global level, it increasingly requires interventions on behalf of the whole human family. Read more about *Fair Trade products* on the next page for small ways you can help make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters around the globe this holiday season.

Fair Trade Products - what exactly does that mean?

The fair trade movement began with a few organizations willing to give producers a fair price for their goods, practice ethical purchasing and marketing, ensure that production does not exploit people or the environment, and promote education and cultural exchange between the North and the South.

Certified Fair Trade products guarantee:

- ❖ **A Fair Price:** farmers and workers receive a fair price for their product that covers basic needs and costs of production and leaves a margin for future investment
- ❖ **Quality Products:** producers' traditional artisanal and farming methods result in exceptional products
- ❖ **Care for the environment:** most fair trade certified coffee, tea and chocolate is certified organic and shade grown
- ❖ **Community impact:** builds on producers' skills and enables communities to play an active part in their own development

What Can You Do? Join us for the Peace & Justice Commission Fair Trade Craft & Coffee Sale before and after all masses **November 8 & 9.**

You will have a chance to order quality crafts from around the world and certified organic fair trade coffee. Not only will you be able to start your Christmas shopping early, you'll be supporting farmers and craftspeople around the globe. A portion of your purchases will help fund the work of our parish Peace & Justice Commission, Catholic Relief Services, Serrv International and Pura Vida Partners. All orders will be filled in time for Christmas.

Catholic Relief Services and Serrv International reach out to groups of low-income people around the world that are part of community-based cooperatives and non-profit organizations. These women and men create traditional, high-quality, handcrafted products. Groups are paid in advance and at a fair price for their products, providing the artisans the chance to pull their families out of poverty's strong hold.

Pura Vida is committed to feeding, clothing and educating at-risk children in coffee-growing regions of the world. Their programs benefit children stuck in the cycle of poverty. In partnership with local and indigenous agencies, Pura Vida creates programs that provide basic needs in a safe environment.

The Metropolitan Alliance for the Common Good is a coalition of diverse civic organizations, including other Catholic parishes, Protestant and Jewish congregations, labor unions and community based non profits totaling over 30 institutions. St Philip Neri is a founding member. Our interest in participating in this area wide organization is clearly stated in its title- the Common Good. As part of the Catholic caucus within MACG, our goal is to insert our Christian beliefs of compassion, equity and stewardship of our natural resources into the decisions that directly affect our lives in the Portland Metro area.

We have a strong tradition of taking our faith and Catholic values into the day to day life of our community through our many ministries that reach out to the immediate needs of our neighbors. But it is also vitally important to address the structures that create or exacerbate the pain and injustices which many of our neighbors experience. MACG offers our parish a very effective means to use our Christian values to influence the decisions that shape our community's life.

Currently MACG has four working groups focussed on **affordable housing** and **sustainable jobs, health care access, public education** and **tax reform**. Each of these working groups is made up of members from the participating institutions including St. Phillip Neri. These working groups study, question, agitate and propose concrete actions that the MACG, can support.

MACG has already had a number of successes.

- ❖ MACG provided key support to St. Francis Parish in its efforts to keep its ministry to the homeless intact.
- ❖ Portland Development Commission has committed to support an affordable housing project sponsored by Rose City Development due to MACG negotiations.
- ❖ MACG has also exerted strong pressure on the city and major developers of the South Waterfront area to provide for affordable housing as well as family wage jobs as the plans for that area are developed.
- ❖ The health care access group was directly involved in the State Legislature's compromise at the end of last session that allowed the Oregon Health Plan, along with many other services to the needy and unprotected, to avoid the budget ax.

Our parish has representatives on all of these working groups. Parishioners can get involved at many levels. If you are interested in getting involved, contact the parish office. A member of the Core Team will contact you.