



All Saints Catholic Parish Lifting Up Our Prophetic Voice A White Paper

**Prepared by All Saints Human Concerns Commission
Approved by the Pastoral Council
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Mindful of the Holy Family, we prayerfully and thoughtfully reflect on current human dignity issues and, in writing this paper, we hope to be an instrument of dialogue, leading others to the justice and peace of Jesus Christ.

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All Saints Catholic Church: Lifting Up Our Prophetic Voice

“Open your mouth for those who cannot speak for themselves, and for the rights of the destitute; open your mouth, decree what is just, defend the needy and the poor!”

Proverbs 31:8-9

I. Introduction

The purpose of this White Paper is twofold: first, to provide a statement from All Saints Parish leadership that lifts up our prophetic voice for solidarity with the stranger; and second, to be an instrument for facilitating conversations about how the principles of Catholic Social Teaching are relevant and can be applied as a call to action within the wider community.

All Saints Catholic Parish, like other central city parishes that have a history of welcoming the stranger, is in a unique position to raise its prophetic voice. Almost one-third of our parish members are converts, many living in mixed marriages. A number of our active members are here through our support of Milwaukee’s refugee resettlement agencies such as Catholic Charities and the Pan-African Community Association. Our parishioners are understandably concerned about recent national actions that may affect immigrants some of whom may be their own relatives.

Throughout Advent, after our Sunday Masses, we provided parishioners with opportunities to voice their fears and sense of dread in a safe environment. Though Advent began the Sunday after the national elections, we were unprepared for the numbers of members who participated in our informal listening sessions and the depth of their anguish regarding religious intimidation, racism, nationalism, resurgence of neo-Nazi hate groups and anti-immigrant rhetoric. Those who facilitated these sessions suggested we report the depth of the concern in a letter to both the Vicar for Urban Ministry and the Archbishop and request their strong support for informed dialogue and a call to action within our community.

A group made up of members of the Human Concerns Commission and the Advent 2016 Listening Sessions Team were tasked with crafting what has now become, through the help of the Holy Spirit, a White paper voicing our unique proclamation of the sacredness of human life and the life-long dignity of the human person.

II. Historical Background

The 1960s yielded a multitude of changes throughout the country and the world. Vatican II created significant changes in the Catholic Church when implementation began in 1965. Urban communities throughout the United States were experiencing the pains of challenges to the status quo. Protests, civil disobedience and disturbances erupted in cities around the country. The civil rights movement awakened a country to the evils of discrimination in dramatic and powerful ways. Milwaukee did not escape the resistance to the segregated communities within its boundaries. Race riots broke out in 1967. Activists led marches and demonstrations demanding fair housing for 200 straight days before the Common Council finally passed a fair housing law in 1968. It is a historical record that Milwaukee Black Catholics, led by the St. Boniface faith community, were at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement and never abandoned their efforts to end racism and segregation. We must also acknowledge the devoted service of many white priests, vowed religious, and laypersons, who often ministered to Black Catholics at great personal sacrifice and hardship, and whose spiritual influence is still present in our community today.

The impact of fair housing in Milwaukee, a city segregated by the viaduct, north and south, resulted in massive white flight. As white families fled the cities in the 1970s, more African American families moved in extending their boundaries in the north and northwest parts of the city. The changing demographic and declining school enrollment left many Catholic schools and parishes with the challenge of addressing the needs for evangelization and the question of how to evangelize to a more diverse population.

Initial efforts in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee to reach the emerging Catholic constituency of African Americans in the 1970s and 1980s were successful. African American priests and deacons were ordained, an office for Black Catholic Concerns was established, the Capuchins were actively engaged in ministry with Black Catholics, the House of Peace was founded, the organization of the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver was initiated.

However, the 70's and 80's also produced globalization. Consequently, companies found cheaper labor in other markets resulting in a significant decline in the

manufacturing base. Milwaukee, known for its strong industrial base began experiencing a departure of companies and jobs. Allis Chalmers, A.O. Smith and other companies began leaving the city resulting in an increase of unemployment. Families that thrived in the industrial era were left with fewer employment resources creating a decline in neighborhoods, deteriorating housing stock and an increase in poverty. The areas of the city primarily affected were in the zip code areas of 53205, 53206, 53208, 53209, 53210, 53212 and 53216. Homes were often sold to absentee landlords who failed to maintain the buildings, trapping African Americans, Latinos and immigrant and refugee families from Africa and Asia in unsafe, lead paint-infested homes. Housing policies and real estate practices such as redlining created a wide socio-economic and cultural gap, which has been difficult to bridge. Racial segregation intertwined with poverty, crime and other social ills resulted in ongoing simmering tension.

By 1995 with a declining population in Milwaukee Catholic schools and parishes, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee closed nine central city parishes including St. Ann, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Boniface, Holy Angels, St. Gall, St. John De Nepomac, St. Leo, St. Elizabeth and St. Agnes. Two new parishes, east and west, were formed as part of a merger along with a chapel for senior ministry at St. John de Nepomuc. The east parish was named St. Martin de Porres and the west parish was named All Saints. Each of the congregations has experienced transitions with the change in leadership and continued declining parish membership.

In addition to the closure of the parishes, the Catholic schools were reorganized. The two remaining schools in the central city were St. Leo and St. Rose Urban Academies. This action substantially reduced the evangelization efforts in the urban communities. Ironically, during this same time the School Choice program became an option for many of the schools that were once Catholic forums for introducing the Catholic faith and formation of families. The Catholic Church lauded for its tradition of educating immigrants and people of color lost its effective means of evangelization to central city children. Parochial education shifted to the suburbs along with the white flight that had been ongoing for 20 years. Consequently, the benefits of a Catholic education--which the descendants of European immigrants experienced and which

resulted in powerful social, economic and political institutions—were not afforded to families in the central city. This disparity is consistent with the housing, economic disadvantages, and incarceration that is present locally and nationally.

III. A History of Refugee Resettlement

All Saints' changing demographic has included the welcoming of refugee families from numerous countries. One of the first families to resettle was from the Sudan in 1997. Since then, All Saints has been a welcoming community to new parish families from over 20 African countries. This multicultural collaboration has enriched our congregation in many ways.

We have also reached outside of our walls and welcomed the community by addressing the needs of the marginalized. In its collaboration with suburban parishes the Gospel of Matthew is present in our feeding the hungry through the meal programs and food pantry. We are living out our faith formed by our Catholic Social Teaching by being in solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world, by recognizing the option for the poor in our outreach programs, and by treating each person with human dignity.

However, we recognize that we are facing many challenges as the leadership in our country transitions. The poor and the immigrants are in the cross-hairs of our government. We as Catholics must become more fully outspoken in the escalation of this exclusion. Our focus must go beyond the soup kitchens, meal programs and food pantries. Otherwise, we will continue to experience events like the August 2016 Sherman Park disturbance—a perfect storm of tensions that gathered over a long period of time and erupted into violence and property damage. For our parish, events like Sherman Park were a clarion call for a paradigm shift to proactively address the disparities many in our community are facing. Likewise, current policies to deputize sheriffs to act as immigration officers becomes yet another call for us to take a stand and lift our prophetic voice.

IV. Impact on the Dignity of the Human Person

*The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.... We believe that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it enhances the life and dignity of the human person.*¹

The results of our most recent national elections and some of the unfolding initiatives of the new administration appear to be our local style of a world-wide trend toward nativism, bigotry, racism, and the tightening of national borders. These observations leave many of us distressed, fearful, and deeply disturbed about how our society values human persons and *how our society values us!* As a matter of faith we believe that we are called by the Holy Spirit to be present to these considerable concerns, lifting up the “signs of our times” about what we have witnessed. Parish members have sincerely asked, “Where is God in all of this?” and “Where is our Church leadership?”

By reflecting on our history of welcoming the stranger through our Catholic ministries and central city presence and in discussing what we have heard during the election and its aftermath (a list of these concerns are attached), we wish to publicly express our fears and distress in a prophetic voice that will promote conversation and dialogue leading to action both within our parish and within the wider community. The attacks on human dignity expressed in recent national elections and the resultant aftermath can only resurrect and reinforce racism, nativism, xenophobia, and religious bigotry which have been embedded in the history of our nation.

Just as the original Native American people before them, each immigrant population from Europe faced hostility and disdain. Roman Catholic immigrants were viewed as genetically inferior, predisposed toward criminality, and coming from a religion and culture that undermined the American way of life. Riots ensued, our churches were burned. The guiding Protestant Ethic from which our country emerged defined what was “American”.² The same anti-immigrant narrative is alive today, primarily focused now on Muslim, Mexican, and other Latino refugees and immigrants.³

Our Catholic Social Teaching provides the most comprehensive expression of principles that protect the *sanctity* of human life and every person's *right to life*. Catholic Social Teaching tells us that we **are** our brothers' and sisters' keepers, seeking the common good for all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

The immigrant and refugee families of All Saints Parish, some of whom have been resettled through our work, are a blessing to us and enrich our community. Their children are the future of our parish. They contribute to and improve the fabric of our society. However, many of our parishioners who are immigrants (documented or undocumented) live in fear. Many of our African immigrants are refugees or former refugees who survived atrocities in their countries of origin. The current developments and deportation calls have thrown many of our parishioners into anxiety and traumatic flashbacks. They are worried about family members still seeking settlement. Refugees are victims of horrible social and physical disruptions and displacement. They need help, not disdain.

It is from this experience that today we observe a normalization of mean-spiritedness, religious bigotry and nativism from the highest reaches of our government. Immigrants and refugees have been vilified and their families threatened to be torn apart by government policies that freeze refugee resettlement, begin mass deportation and promote the impending wall between the United States and Mexico. Those who follow Islam are viewed as a threat to our American way of life.⁴

We have seen and heard vile anti-Catholic rhetoric surface once again in this country. Recently, Catholic Social Teaching and the Roman Catholic Church have been excoriated as un-American and communistic by some media outlets. The Gospel of Prosperity has replaced the Beatitudes as the standard for Christianity. Wealth is viewed as the epitome of leadership, success, and a sign of God's favor.⁵

When he visited the United States and addressed Congress, Pope Francis and the Roman Catholic Church were viciously attacked for the Holy Father's call to embrace the poor and the marginalized. In public statements, Ann Coulter, author, columnist, and commentator declared to the nation:

I'm an American and this is why our founding fathers (not "immigrants!") distrusted Catholics and wouldn't make them citizens. Catholics were not accepted until they became more AMERICAN Catholic and less ROMAN Catholic.⁶

Ms. Coulter also insisted that her nativist, anti-Catholic biases form the basis for this administration's rhetoric and immigration policies toward Mexicans. Keith Boag, author of Make America White Again, in commenting on the Coulter interview, stated:

Adios America! is a polemic about how traditional Americans—'free white men of good character', they were once called—are losing their country. There are pages and pages of news clippings about free-loading immigrants flooding into the U.S. committing crimes and indulging in the so-called 'rape culture' – entire chapters of it, in fact.⁷

V. Nationalism, Racism, Xenophobia, and Religious Bigotry

Today, sadly, we are witnessing “normalization” of racial hate rhetoric and actions across the nation. Increasingly, Muslims are targets of hate as are people of color. Anti-Semitism is on the rise. Catholics are derided. Drawing from a deep well of shared experience across generations, we fear that the United States history of lynching, civil rights suppression and intimidation, experienced by some of our grandparents and great-grandparents, will once again be visited upon our children and their hopes and dreams for the future. The message of white supremacy found a national stage during the national and local campaigns, was supported by Neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan and was used to support partisan interests. Racism is both a sin⁸ and a disease. It must be named and confronted, not allowed to fester and ooze unchallenged, leading to “strange fruits” from a hanging tree.⁹

Our ancestors gave their blood, sweat and tears, indeed their lives through chattel slavery to build the economic base of this country and many in military service made the ultimate sacrifice to preserve our freedom. The fear of the destruction of white culture is easily observed today on social media:

- American White Nationalist movements have a growth of more than 600% on Twitter since 2012, outperforming ISIS in “nearly every social metric from follower counts to tweets per day.”¹⁰
- This same study found that our country saw a sharp increase in followers, from about 3,500 in 2012 to 22,000 in 2016.¹¹

- According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), there were 917 active hate groups in 2016, up from 892 in 2015.¹²
- The category of anti-Muslim groups tripled in number, from 34 in 2015, to 101 in 2016.¹³
- SPLC found 1,094 bias-related incidents around the country in the first 34 days following the November 8, 2016 national elections.¹⁴
- On Presidents' Day, 2017, 11 Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) across the country received bomb threats, adding to a total of 69 incidents targeting 54 JCCs in 27 states since January of this year.¹⁵

With the recent executive order to ban refugees from six¹⁶ countries, including Syria, many Jewish Holocaust survivors are experiencing flash backs to the horrors they experienced. Telling their stories at the Illinois Holocaust Museum, they warned that the policy stopping immigration from these six Muslim-majority countries could result in death. Those interviewed said government policy banning immigrants and refugees on the basis of race, national origin or ethnicity mirrors the mindset that created the Holocaust:

Standing in front of a real train car that took victims to Auschwitz, Fritzie Fritzshal said she is speaking now because she remembers what it was like to be inside of them, separated from family. She was just thirteen years old. 'Hunger came back to me that they are facing. The cold that they are facing. The immigration lines we faced, that we couldn't get out of. All of the countries we were in because nobody would accept the Jews. And this is what's happening with these immigrants now.' she said" Fritzie said her entire family was killed because no one wanted them.¹⁷

VI. Welcoming the Stranger

As Catholics we are called to take concrete measures to overcome the misunderstanding, ignorance, competition, and fear that stand in the way of genuinely welcoming the stranger in our midst and enjoying the communion that is our destiny as Children of God.¹⁸

In 2000 the Catholic Bishops wrote a pastoral letter entitled "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity;" a call for welcoming the alien among us in accordance to the Scriptures: *"You shall not oppress an alien; you well know how it feels to be an alien, since you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt."*¹⁹ The United States, a nation that claims to be the land of immigrants should not behave any differently from its cherished tradition.

Diversity in the Catholic Church is its identity; unity in diversity is the very essence of our universal Catholic church. However, the current xenophobic environment in our country is creating fissures along the fault-lines of our diversity. The current climate of exclusion and otherness is undermining our national unity and cannot be, in any form, condoned by our Church communities. All Saints Catholic Parish reaffirms that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and deserves to live his or her life with dignity and purpose.

The Pan-African Community Association (PACA), is an organization providing services to immigrants and refugees from Africa and other parts of the world. PACA was created at All Saints in response to the growing needs of African immigrants and refugees who needed a cultural broker to fully integrate into the economic and social fabric of our communities. Since 2010, PACA has successfully resettled more than 800 refugees from more than 10 different countries of various ethnic and religious backgrounds. It has facilitated the reunification of dozens of families over the years. All these families have successfully integrated into society; their children are doing well in schools and their parents are pursuing the American dream through hard work and determination.

Wars and conflicts dismantle family units but with the help of the refugee family reunification program, families have been reunited. Many of the reunified families worship at All Saints. The current anti-immigrant and anti-refugee policies pose dangers to family reunifications. In 2000 the United States Catholic Bishops wrote:

The 1996 immigration laws have torn apart families that have established themselves in the United States over many years, sometimes on the basis of minor criminal offences duly punished years ago.²⁰

Many refugees who have left family members behind in the refugee camps or other parts of the world are extremely worried about whether the emerging policies will ever allow them to reunite with their families. A family is the small church unit and the core of any society. All Saints stands for the unity and integrity of the family; strongly denouncing any attempt to dismantle or weaken families regardless of ethnicity, country of origin or religious background.

Refugees and immigrants are assets to any community they join. One of our refugee students who is a freshman at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee stated, “I wanted to be a nurse because I wanted to make a difference in my community.” This future nurse represents the vision and aspiration of our new Americans, who in the African tradition place the welfare of their parishes and communities ahead of their self-interest.

Recently, at an All Saints’ Mass, there were over 25 youth participating in roles of hospitality, acolytes, readers, Eucharistic ministers, and presenters. As they all gathered at the end of Mass, it was clear that over 50% of the youth group, middle and high school students, were the children of immigrants from African countries that have resettled in Milwaukee. This was a clear indication that scapegoating refugees and immigrants as a “problem” of our society defies honesty and human integrity. It is immoral and stands against the grain of American Catholic tradition.

VII. Conclusion

The Church has the right, indeed the duty to proclaim justice on the social, national and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of man and his very salvation demand it. The Church ... has a proper and specific responsibility which is identified with her mission of giving witness before the world of the need of love and justice contained in the Gospel message, a witness to be carried out in Church institutions themselves and in the lives of Christians.²¹

All Saints Catholic community stands on biblical grounds to voice its call for social justice as our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers. The Gospel teaches us that we will be judged on how we treat our sisters and brothers in difficult circumstances, “If you did this to the least of my brothers you did it unto me” (Matthew 25).

As Catholics we are challenged and compelled by our faith to be in solidarity with those who are suffering oppression and contempt. Nationalism, racism, xenophobia and religious bigotry are creeping into our national and international sense of “new normal.” As a matter of justice and love for our neighbor, we must acknowledge these “signs of our times.” As were the prophets of old, we are admonished to act justly, show mercy, and walk humbly before our God (Micah 6:8). Unless we understand Catholic Social Teaching and take a strong stand now against any form of injustice and

discrimination, it may be too late for action by the time we fully realize the harm that has come to those who are poor, oppressed and marginalized.

In concluding this white paper, we, members of All Saints Catholic Parish Human Concerns Commission, offer our brothers and sisters in the community, the opportunity to join in a conversation about the ideas in this paper in light of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Where do we find common ground? Where do we disagree? Is there something that we can do together to address the issues raised in this paper? Further more we invite readers to join us in our desire to become a prophetic voice:

1. Reflect on your parish history and share your stories with one another. Where do you find evidence of Catholic Social Justice principles in your pastoral or ministerial service?
2. Begin your own conversation and a dialogue around Catholic Social Teaching and immigration.
3. Develop an action plan unique to your parish, organization, locale or setting that will give you a voice and a presence for those we do not see and hear; those who, for the sake of the Gospel, must be heard and acknowledged.
4. In your Sunday liturgy's Prayer of the Faithful, include a Mass petition "that the prayers of this community may help our nation move from fear to understanding and from hate to healing."

Addendum: All Saints Advent 2016 Listening Sessions

Below is an unedited listing of concerns from All Saints 2016 Advent Listening Sessions. There was a visible sense of foreboding, distress, and depression as we began Advent. The parish and Listening Sessions Team responded by inviting those who wished to meet after Sunday Masses express their anxieties in safe environment:

- 1) Scared for nation, hostile racial overtones
- 2) Donald Trump is a horrible person who lies and cheats.
- 3) The Catholic Church should have demanded accountability for his attacks on immigrants, Muslims and Trump's Machiavellian actions (the end justifies the means), something we teach our children not to do. When asked if he regretted his inflammatory statements, he said, "No, I won."
- 4) Fear of block granting Medicaid, privatizing Medicare and social security.
- 5) Are we going to get into another war?

- 6) Fear of this country putting Black people “back in their place”
 - 7) Have no sense that he [the President] cares about people
 - 8) Increase in neo-Nazi and KKK displays supporting Mr. Trump during the election
 - 9) Increase in hate activities since the election.
 - 10) Fear [the President’s] misuse of power.
 - 11) Increase in racism, sexism, homophobia, fear of the “other.”
 - 12) Fear of mass deportations.
 - 13) Bringing on more terrorism, racial divisions will be more prominent, hate speech will become normalized. Remember Jim Crow and the lynching.
 - 14) He [the President] passes off nationalism as patriotic.
 - 15) He [the President] is a giant hypocrite condemning corporations who manufacture abroad, when he does the same thing.
 - 16) WHERE IS GOD IN ALL OF THIS?
 - 17) Concerns over his [President’s] cabinet picks from the top 1%. He is only interested in billionaires in his cabinet.
 - 18) Anti-pope sentiments, anti- Catholic rhetoric/sentiments. Where is US Catholic response to Donald Trump insulting Pope Francis?
 - 19) Concern over lack of respect and care for the environment.
 - 20) As a foreigner and person of color, the rhetoric of immigration does not resonate” quote from parishioner.
 - 21) Concerns that Trump’s policies will interfere with people’s abilities to take care of their families; people want access to basic amenities and this will be threatened with proposed plans for health care, Medicare and Medicaid.
 - 22) Electoral college is an oxymoron to democracy.
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End Notes

¹USCCB, Life And Dignity of the Human Person, <http://usccb.org>

² Weber. Max. **The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism**, 1905, A founding text in economic sociology and sociology in general, it is considered the fourth most important book of the 20th Century by the International Sociological Association

³ Garcia, Feliks, [Why Ann Coulter is Dead Wrong About Immigration in America](#), December 11, 2015

⁴John Paul II, *Welcoming the Poor: Reigniting Hope*, 1998, “the attitude of welcoming is increasingly necessary in confronting today’s diverse forms of distancing ourselves from others. This is profoundly evidenced in problems of millions of refugees and exiles, in the phenomenon of racial intolerance as well as intolerance toward the person whose only “fault” is a search for work and better living conditions outside of his own country, and the fear of all who are different and thus seen as a threat.”

⁵Mannion, Msgr. M. Francis, Prosperity Gospel is a Travesty of the Good News of Christ, Catholic News Agency, <http://catholicnewsagency.com>, October 19, 2015

⁶Kleefeld, Eric. Ann Coulter Goes Anti-Catholic For Pope Francis Visit, The National Memo, February 22, 2017

⁷Boag, Keith. Make America White Again, Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC), September 7, 2016

⁸USCCB, Brothers and Sisters to Us, 1079

⁹Referencing Billie Holiday's song, "Strange Fruit", written by Abel Meeropol, 1939

Southern trees bear strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees...

¹⁰Berger, JM. a George Washington University study, as quoted on <http://independent.co.uk/white>, Feb.22, 2017

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Southern Poverty Law Center, Hatewatch, Feb.22, 2017, <http://splcenter.org>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ President Trump's first executive order banned immigrants from seven countries. In his revised executive order, he removed Iraq from the original ban.

¹⁷Baichwal, Ravi. Holocaust Survivors Fear For Refugees Affected by Trump Ban, February 2, 2017, <http://abc7chicago.com>

¹⁸ USCCB, Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, 2000, <http://usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/pastoral-care-of-migrants-refugees-and-travelers>

¹⁹Exodus 23:9

²⁰ USCCB, Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, 2000

²¹ *Justice in the World, A Statement of the World Synod of Catholic Bishops* (November 30, 1971) no.36 (Vatican Council II: More Post Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery, OP [Northpoint. N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1982])