

Social Justice and Ministry Committee of the Parish of Saint John the Baptist  
Report to Parish Council  
January 2025

The charge of the Social Justice and Ministry Committee of Saint Johns is to:

“... Keep.. the parish aware of concerns for peace and social justice within and beyond the parish boundaries by providing information and promoting programs and projects which help parishioners think globally and act locally in matters which concern all Christians today.

The Social Justice and Ministry Committee of Saint John the Baptist Parish is a catalyst for parish involvement in social justice and ministry issues.”

We understand our tasks to be:

1. Education concerning peace and social justice concerns. (Social Justice Awareness)
2. Promoting parishioner awareness and involvement in the service of God by serving others. (Individual and Parish Social Justice Ministry)

Our Activities in 2024 and 2025:

1. Lenten Soup and Speaker Series

Weekly in Lent, after the Stations of the Cross, we arrange for speaker presentations on a social justice topic, followed by a light supper of soup and various breads and desserts. The soup is purchased from the St. John’s kitchen, the bread and desserts are donated by committee members and the parish kitchen. Examples of topics addressed include income disparity; the environment; and the cost of homes and childcare. (Cf poster following this Report.) This coming Lent, our series will start with a speaker on Catholic Social Teaching itself, as reflected in the Bible. The series will then move on to education regarding needs within our community and efforts to address those needs by the Catholic Worker, Habitat for Humanity and Catholic Charities.

2. Focus

In addition to social justice concerns, we also want to include raising awareness of the call we have to serve others, ie Catholic Social Teaching. We have also struggled with how- beyond education on issues- to promote parishioner service to others, as well as service to others as a parish community. We are a small committee, and actually organizing a program of service seems too daunting. But this year, with the Adopt-A-Parish program, it is apparent that we can catalyze parishioner social justice involvement by partnering with programs that have already done the organization. There are organizations ready to do the work with the help of

volunteers. Our means to accomplish involvement is to work on recruiting individuals to participate.

This re-focus suggests that in the upcoming year, we work on continual awareness and recruitment for involvement. We hope to show pictures of our volunteers working at the food shelves, Habitat for Humanity and Laundry Love. (IE, these aren't abstract ideas, look at your co-parishioners doing this.) Can we make this involvement, accompanied by education about why we do it, a bit of the sense of who we are as a church community? That's a tall order, but it will have some of our effort.

### 3. Adopt-A-Parish Program

This year, we were offered a wonderful opportunity to understand how we might best fit into parish social justice ministry. Catholic Charities – the social justice ministry of the Diocese of Saint Cloud- essentially seeks to involve parishes to recruit the volunteers they need to operate their food shelf and emergency services program. The committee recognized its efforts to sign up volunteers would provide an opportunity for parishioner participation.

While this project is yet in process, it is possible that the parish will participate annually. It fits the need we have for a functioning social justice program for which we can catalyze parishioner service.

### 4. Promotion on non-affiliated projects.

Individual committee members are personally active in social justice work. The committee promotes this work in our community to further awareness and opportunities for parishioners for social justice activity. Two of these projects are Habitat for Humanity and Laundry Love. Habitat for Humanity is well known. In the past, committee members have arranged for volunteers to be picked up at the Parish Center to go to a Habitat worksite together. Laundry Love is an effort of local Catholic Workers to raise money for and provide families with assistance in paying for local laundromat use in St Joseph. This year, the St Joseph Optimist Club generously donated to Laundry Love. In keeping with our focus for the year, we intend to promote parishioner awareness and involvement.

### 5. The Benedictine Catholic Community

For the Adopt-a-Parish program, we were solicited not as St. John's and St. Joseph's parishes, but as the Benedictine Catholic Community. This truly has adjusted our committee perspective. As we sought to work with St. Joseph's, we encountered great support and assistance, but no counterpart to our committee in their structure. With all-parish council permission, we essentially functioned as a BCC committee, advertising the volunteer opportunity to both parishes. With encouragement, we have publicized our meetings and welcomed interested

parishioners from Saint Joseph to join the committee. In January and, hopefully, February, our meetings will be at Heritage Hall in St. Joseph to facilitate this. We are open to working with interested St Joseph parishioners as one community. Would the parish councils see a benefit in designating this committee as one of our Benedictine Catholic Community (or of both parishes), rather than a committee of the parish of Saint John the Baptist? What would serve best?