**Social Ministry, Joseph’s Place, Community Dinners**

January 2018 Update

***“I want to ask you a favor. I want you to walk together and take care of one another.”***

*…Pope Francis*

Dear Friends,

 On March 13, we will celebrate the fifth anniversary of our Holy Father’s election to the papacy. This has been an extraordinary time in the life of the Church. This man, who stunned us all by asking for our prayers and blessing on his election night, has challenged us to think differently about who we are and what the Church is. He continues to call us to embrace the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. The Fathers of this council taught us that we are a Holy and Priestly People, anointed by reason of our Baptism to be collaborators and co-workers with the pastors of the Church for the building up of the Body of Christ. By his own example, he continues to teach us that we must love and take care of one another. Like Jesus, the good shepherd, he encourages us to reach out to all who are lost and in need of our love. He refrains from judgement. Much like Jesus, he accepts the sinner as she or he is, and hopes that God’s mercy will move our sisters and brothers to repentance and a new life. Indeed, we have a true shepherd sitting on the Chair of Saint Peter. One who understands our trials and tribulations. One who is willing to extend mercy and compassion in the name of Christ.

 **“Walking together and taking care of one another”** is really what we are all about! This is what Social Ministry is, this is what Joseph’s Place is, this is what Community Dinners are all about. Everything we do and all our related ministries are about taking care of each other out of love for Jesus and the Gospel.

 In that spirit, I want to share with you what is happening and how we are reaching out to our community to put the Gospel of Christ and Pope Francis’ teachings into practice.

1. One group that is in need of our mission and mercy are those who are in prison. Many individuals whose families live in the Maplewood area are incarcerated in the Monroe County Jail. These persons are serving time because of low level crimes, such as the possession and use of marijuana. While we cannot excuse their violation of the law, we can let them know that we are praying for them and willing to help them once their debt to society has been paid. To that end, we are considering establishing a Saint Dismas’ Society at the Cathedral. As you may know, Saint Dismas (The Good Thief) defended Christ as He hung on the cross. Dismas was the first to enter the kingdom of heaven. Our bishop, Salvatore Matano, has often spoken about this good thief. We would like to encourage parishioners who are interested to come forward and join this society. You will be fulfilling our Lord’s command to care for those who are imprisoned. If you join, we will discuss ways that we can serve the imprisoned. Contact robert.difulio@sienacatholic.org

2. At Thanksgiving, we joined with the pastors of our neighboring Christian churches to give thanks to God for our many blessings. The turnout was small, but the Holy Spirit was evident in the music and preaching. We would like to continue this outreach. We are thinking about having other activities with our sisters and brothers of other faith traditions. If you would like to help us with this, please contact robert.difulio@sienacatholic.org

3. We are celebrating the “Year of the Eucharist.” The Holy Scriptures teaches us that “we are one bread, one body.” Just as the body has many parts, the Church has many parts. Each part has a specific function and serves a particular purpose. As we celebrate the many parts of Christ’s Body, we also celebrate the diversity of the Church. The Cathedral Community is a home to many cultures, and so, we wish to acknowledge this diversity by having a Multicultural Festival that will involve all our parishioners, neighbors and different ethnic and racial groups. If you are interested in participating in this Festival, which will tentatively take place in June, contact viera\_louis@yahoo.com

4. We are always in need of volunteers. You may ask, “What can I do?” There are many “single servings of service” that are available. You can help sort food and stock shelves at Joseph’s Place. Contact pscarbinski@gmail.com You can pray for the incarcerated and provide needed clothing. Contact robert.difulio@sienacatholic.org You can help at our garden or farm stand. Contact marcus.ebenhoe@dor.org You can become a member of our Social Justice Committee. Contact robert.difulio@sienacatholic.org You and your family can serve at our community dinners, once or many times. Contact robert.difulio@sienacatholic.org You can be a volunteer at our food pantry, serving our sisters and brothers one on one. Contact pscarbinski@gmail.com **Most of you are already involved and your service is deeply appreciated. Please reach out to others whom you know that are not involved. Invite them to join us in this adventure of discipleship.**

5. The Pastoral Council is very concerned about the relationship between Law Enforcement and our local community. We stand on both sides, supporting our police in their duty to serve and protect our neighbors and, at the same time, defending those who are unjustly accused and victims of abuse. The Pastoral Council, with the support and approval of Father McKenna, has endorsed an initiative of the City Council and others to establish a new system of monitoring the interactions of citizens and police. The system is called the Police Accountability Board, PBA. If you wish to learn more about this, please contact marcus.ebenhoe@dor.org or fr.kevin.mckenna@dor.org

6. Do you know that we have an Opioid Crisis Committee? A number of weeks ago, the Gates Police Chief and other concerned parties met with the Social Ministry Team to discuss this topic. A sub-committee has been established to find ways that the Cathedral Community can help with this epidemic. Resources are already in place and we have been working with Greater Harvest Church to address this issue. Also, an initiative is in the pipeline to help our parishioners to understand the importance and implications of this crisis. If you want more information or would like to join this effort contact marcus.ebenhoe@dor.org

7. **February 10 and 11 is Public Policy Advocacy Weekend.** The issue this year is the “Dreamers Act.” Please consult the bulletin of January 21 and following bulletins about this issue. We will need people on February 10 and 11 to solicit petition signatures. The “Dreamers” are only one part of the consistent Social Justice teaching of the Church. Respect for the dignity of all life from “womb to tomb” is part of the Church’s teaching from Leo XIII until the present day. All popes from then until now have supported this consistent life-ethic. It is part of the very fabric of Church life. It is consistent with the most ancient traditions of the Church.

8. One final update. The Finance Council, under the leadership of John Spinosa, Chair, and Carol Wynne, Director of Finance and Administration, have been working very hard to address the recommendations of the Pastoral Plan’s Finance and Facilities Focus Group. Their efforts have been ongoing over the past year. The Cathedral Community is our “common spiritual home.” Like any other home it requires consistent repair and maintenance. Please “stay tuned” for what we need in order to continue providing exceptional worship and ministry to our parishioners and the local community.

Dear friends and co-workers,

 Thank you for all you do. The social ministries of the Cathedral Community could not go on without you. Many thanks to our pastor, Father Kevin McKenna, who has allowed us to collaborate with him and take co-responsibility for the life of our parish. Many thanks to our wonderful ministerial staff who help and support us. There is only one thing more we must do. As disciples of Christ, we must recruit other disciples. Reach out to others and bring them into the circle. We must spread the work and the love.

…Bob

***“In the evening of life, we shall be judged on love alone.”***

*…Saint John of the Cross*