JSRI Future Activities

JSRI staff and associates—working from home—will continue monitoring local, state, and federal administrative, legislative, and judicial actions regarding our priority issues and the impact of Covid-19, participating in advocacy communications with authorities, recommending resources on our website and by email, producing research and setting for publications; and activating our advocacy network as appropriate.

JSRI Recent Activities

March 23

Fr. Kammer participated as vice-chair in a virtual Jesuit Volunteer Board meeting.

March 23

Dr. Dennis Kalob is serving on the Board of Directors of the Medezeggenschapsraad.

March 25

Fr. Kammer was the presenter for a "Virtual Solidarity on Tap" online event.

April 14

The JSRI Staff and Associates met by videoconference.

April 15

Dr. Sue Weishar was a guest presenter for a "Virtual Volunteer Appreciation" meeting.

April 17

The JSRI Advisory Board met by videoconference.

April 17

Dr. Kalob is serving on the newly formed JSRI Board of Directors.

March 17

Fr. Kammer participated in the first meeting of the JSRI Staff and Associates.

First, there is the foundational belief in the sanctity and dignity of every human person. This underlies the high priority in public decision-making that orders drastic shutdowns in economic, educational, and political life to slow down the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and saves lives. Whether those lives are old, young, or "compromised," they are sacred and deserve all reasonable measures to limit the pandemic's spread. The lives of our neighbors and all others across our communities also are as precious as those of our families and ourselves.

The second principle unpacks the word "social": the principle is common good, rooted in Greek and Roman philosophy as the goal of political life and enunciated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church as basic to our entire social ethics. Against rampant individualism, the Catechism defines the common good as: "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily."

The common good applies to every human community, especially to the political community where the state's role is "to defend and promote the common good of civil society, its citizens, and intermediate bodies."

The Catechism notes these three elements of the common good: respect for the individual's social well-being and development of the group, and peace which results from the stability of a just society.

Regarding the first essential of individual respect, the Catechism notes that all "public authorities are bound to respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person." This means far more than the utilitarian "greatest good for the greatest number," but insists that rights respect individual rights.

The common good's second element—the group's social well-being and development—manifests that authority's proper functioning is to arbitrate between various particular interests in society, which becomes ever more sensitive in our current pandemic. Essential to this is ensuring the accessibility of each person to what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on. In [4] Union members in pandemic times, common good pandemics of policies will often trump the claims to individual freedom to mix socially or to "open "my business" regardless of social cost.

The third element of peace and stability of a just social order presupposes that "authority should ensure by morally acceptable means the security of society and its citizens."

This may seem less urgent now and yet, consistent with the present moment unless and until violence comes to dominate the public scene in response to the pandemic or measures enacted to control it.

Two other principles from Catholic teaching come into play now. One is the Gospel's preferential love for "the least" among us, who are already the most impacted because of unemployment or the vulnerability of their jobs (low pay, low benefits) and their limited resources. The other is solidarity with people far and wide, including first responders and "essential workers" here and the people of poorer countries with fewer resources to control the pandemic and its impacts.

As we consider the constraints of this pandemic regime, we should remember the Gospel from John 13 read on Holy Thursday this month. Jesus fakes the bar from loving-our-neighbor-as-ourselves to "love one another as I have loved you."