

The Office of Social Concerns mission:

The role of the ministry of social concerns is to communicate the mission of the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church. That is, to advance the dissemination of and adherence to the seven tenets of the Catholic Church. That will include all areas as follows:

- **Life and Dignity of the Human Person:** People are meant to serve and care for one another. Scripture tells us repeatedly of God's love for us. We are called to see every person through the eyes of God and to love them because God loved them (and us) first. To do this we must, as a family of God's children, seek out ways to help people in their time of need. To do that our office works with parishes to help find ways to help people and families find hope and cope with whatever challenges might come their way.
- **Call to Family, Community, and Participation:** Our faith is rooted in the mystery of the Trinity: the divine relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's own essence is a communion of persons. Created in God's image, we too are social creatures. We are called to live this Trinitarian reality of self-giving love. It is in the community that we are shaped and formed. It is through the community that the dignity of every individual is realized. It is out of the community that we are sent to love and serve the world. Our office endeavors to build community in our parishes, our area faith communities and within the Diocese as a whole. In building community they will be better equipped to persevere when beset with a challenge to their community.
- **Rights and Responsibilities:** We are created in God's image. As such, every person has the right to life. People have a right to their dignity and quality of life: food, shelter, health care, education, and meaningful employment. Corresponding to these rights are responsibilities. Because we are created in the image of the Triune God, we must respect the rights of others and care for others according to God's commandments and example. Our office of Social Concerns works with individuals, families and church and civic groups to assist any and all who have a need as they struggle to maintain their dignity in difficult situations.
- **Solidarity:** We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences. We are our brother and sister's keeper. As Christians, we are as St. Paul reminds us, one body. Love of neighbor has global dimensions in our World today. At the core of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Peace is more than a lack of conflict. Peace, or in Hebrew Shalom, means literally "right relationship." The gospel calls us to be peacemakers: that we live in "right relationship" with others, God and ourselves. Pope Paul VI taught, "If you want peace, work for justice." Our love for our entire human family demands that we work for justice and for peace, that we promote God's shalom in our world. Our office is an extension of the Catholic Church to be out in the community in times of trouble to bring hope and share in the trials of God's children.
- **Care for God's Creation:** In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth and set humans as his stewards to care for his creation. Care for God's creation was God's fruitful commandment to humanity and a fundamental requirement of our faith. Moreover, creation witnesses to God's existence. God reveals himself in creation and we see in nature the fingerprints of God. Creation is always an object of praise in Israel's prayer

and also the prayers of the early Christians. We are called to honor and protect our planet and its people-to live in right relationship with all of God's creation. At the dawn of creation, God commanded us to be fruitful and multiply, but also to use his creation for his good. Our office carries out this mission by a weekly program directed towards the rural people and farming community with programming tying together our human efforts in the field of agriculture and farming with our faith life and God's plan for this world.

- **Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers:** Work is about more than making a living; it is a form of participation in the creative work of God. People have a right to decent, meaningful work and fair wages. Workers have the right to organize and join unions, own private property, and to economic initiative. Work should promote the dignity of the worker. Our economy exists to serve people, not vice versa. Our faith calls us to demand justice for all workers and a just economy that serves the life and dignity of all. Likewise, our work contributes to the good life of our brothers and sisters. Paul is speaking to us all as he says: “We ask you, brothers, to respect those who are laboring among you and who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you, and to show esteem for them with special love on account of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.” 1 Thessalonians 5 :(12-13)

- **Option for and with the Poor:** The morality of society is judged by how well our most vulnerable members are faring. Just as a parent gives more care and resources to a sick child, in order that the child might become healthy, so we as Christians are called to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. Those with the greatest need require the greatest response. In a society marked by the deepening divide between rich and poor, the gospel calls us to radical and self-giving love-to meet the needs of the poor and vulnerable and to oppose the structures that perpetuate poverty and abuse the vulnerable. The office of Social Concerns is very active in assistance to people and families who are vulnerable. We are actively engaged in efforts to end homelessness. Our office has played a role in the establishment of a homeless shelter in New Ulm (NUMAS Haus). We are looking for ways to duplicate this effort in the diocese as well. As Paul tells us: “We urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, cheer the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient with all. See that no one returns evil for evil; rather, always seek what is good [both] for each other and for all”1 Thessalonians 5 :(14-15)

The Office of Social Concerns maintains a presence within the Diocese to all Catholics. When any situation occurs where we may be of assistance, we can respond in such a way so as to be a positive helping hand. Thus, we build hope that will give people a positive opportunity moving forward, together with Jesus Christ, into a future they will be better equipped to manage.