

A CALL TO SOCIAL VIGILANTES

Saturday, March 5, 2016

Last Saturday, March 5th, from 10 AM to 3 PM, the St. Boniface Cathedral's Parish Hall served as a sharing place for many social justice players from the Winnipeg area.

This was the first Diocesan Social Justice Awareness Day organized by the Archdiocese of St. Boniface. The goal was to share, meet, and possibly unite the region's disparate forces regarding social justice.



"We hope that after this day, people will be interested in getting involved in forming a Diocesan Committee for Social Justice," explained Louis Balcaen, a volunteer who helped organize the event.

L to R: Louis Balcaen, Archbishop Albert LeGatt, Myron Rogal, Pierre-Alain Giffard.

He feels it's important that the diocese become a resource center for parishes and community groups that want to help others. Archbishop Albert LeGatt agrees with this. "We are reflecting on a diocesan service that will encourage, open doors and bring forces together, rather than administer."



To inspire the attendees, various speakers presented on the fruits of their labour in social justice. The first speaker was Myron Rogal, who has worked as the Coordinator of the diocesan Office for Justice and Peace for the Diocese of Saskatoon for the past 3 years. He presented a methodical method for improving the management of social justice services.



Myron Rogal, Coordinator of the diocesan Office for Justice and Peace, Diocese of Saskatoon

With his step by step approach, he has played a central role in the growth of services in his diocese. He pointed out many times, however, that his method is not a blueprint, but is intended to provide reference points. Myron Rogal came to speak in Winnipeg also hoping to “learn how things are done here.” After having had the privilege of seeing the progress made in his own diocese, he is very interested in helping Manitoban players. “We are one another’s greatest resource,” he pointed out.



It was thus in the spirit of learning that he attended, like everyone else who came to the event, the other lectures given throughout the day. These included presentations by John Talaga (Knights of Columbus), Doreen Howe (Catholic Women’s League), Jean Balcaen (St. Joachim Parish), and Germaine Gross (St. Bernadette Parish). By sharing details of their social justice activities, the speakers hoped to give new ideas to those parish representatives in attendance. For Pauline Ryder, a representative of Blessed Sacrament Parish, she was there to “get information on how to organize a parish committee.”

It was important to the Diocese that the various parishes participate, as one of its goals is “to have a social justice representative in each parish to connect with the Diocese,” explained Pierre-Alain Giffard, Director of Pastoral Services.

At the end of the day, many people signed the Archdiocese’s invitation to continue on and to possibly create a Committee for Social Justice. Pleasantly surprised, Louis Balcaen concluded that “people have a lot of good will. It’s a natural instinct to want to help others.”