



The World Community for Christian Meditation

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Good Friday Walk for Justice

GOOD FRIDAY WALK FOR JUSTICE

There are few pious devotions that also address social justice. However, for at least two decades Pax Christi groups have been walking the Stations of the Cross while reflecting on issues of social justice. Pax Christi is the international Catholic peace organization. As such it strives to create a world that reflects the peace of Christ. The members witness to Christian nonviolence, rejection of war and every form of violence and dominance. The small group of Pax Christi members in Houston has been sponsoring the Walk for Justice in downtown Houston for at least two decades.

The Stations of the Cross is a prayerful reflection on the suffering and death of Christ in fourteen moments. Added to that Catholic devotion is a reflection on a specific social justice issue at each station. The most closely related station and cause is the twelfth station of the death of Jesus at which is considered the abolition of the death penalty, particularly in Texas. Another example is the concern about human trafficking especially of women and children for the sex trade which is considered in conjunction with the eighth station where Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem. The other issues considered in 2012 were: the closing of the School of the Americas (SOA/WHINSEC); racial discrimination; ecology; religious persecution; Maryknoll Missionary projects; universal nuclear disarmament; the global financial crisis; advocacy for the hungry; justice for Houston janitors; undocumented worker justice; health care reform; and end to war in the Middle East.

The location for the Walk for Justice has been importantly symbolic in bringing the saving message of Christ to the world. Originally, the walk began at the county jail at the north end of downtown and wound through the business area of Houston toward City Hall. Walking on the sidewalks only, no permit was needed. This proved to be a longer walk than most wanted to make, especially in Houston heat. For the last seven years, the walk has been in the large park in front of City Hall. Being at the civil hub of Houston holds the symbolic value of bringing the gospel of justice and peace to the heart of the city. Good Friday is a holiday for most people including city hall staff, so the area is not highly populated on that day, but the Walk is very public as there are people in the park and traffic passes on the adjoining streets.

The participants are mainly Catholics, but of all ages and social classes. Youth from a predominantly minority parish provide a dramatization of each of the stations, while some of the texts for the stations are created and presented by Catholic high school students. This year Fr. Vince Dulock and Basilian novices, Alejandro and Jose, were helpful participants.

The presence of youth is a means of catechizing young Catholics about Catholic teaching and living of social justice. The Walk for Justice is not a demonstration, but rather a prayerful action that refocuses the hearts of the participants. It is a dynamic call to conversion.

Richard Wahl, csb. has been a member of Pax Christi since 1983 and the organizer of the Walk for Justice since 2006.

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