



THE NEW VISION

Interfaith Council hosts discussion on systematic change

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Photo provided to The New Vision.

Interfaith leaders talk in small groups at a gathering held at Most Holy Trinity Parish in Tucson on Aug. 19.

By CLARA DUPNIK

Congregations of faith can work together for the common good of the greater community, Bishop Gerald Kicanas and more than 60 clergy and religious leaders said this past month. Bishop Gerald Kicanas hosted the gathering at Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church on Aug. 19. Episcopal Bishop Kirk Smith and Lutheran Bishop Stephen Talmage also participated in the discussion of ways congregations can work together for the common good of our community. New and transferred clergy from around the Roman Catholic Diocese of Tucson heard from the bishops, Kevin Courtney from the Pima County Interfaith Council (PCIC) and Joe Rubio from the Arizona Interfaith Network (AIN). Both groups are part of a network of independent grassroots community organizations affiliated with



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the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF).

Bishop Kicanas told of his own experience of attending an IAF leadership training institute in New York while he was serving in Chicago. He suggested that new clergy would be well-served by attending similar trainings scheduled this fall in Phoenix and Yuma. He mentioned that he was happy to say that many parishes in the Diocese were involved at the very start of PCIC and AIN and encouraged clergy of all faiths to work together, especially on the issues of poverty, education and immigration reform.

Among the clergy who shared their own stories with the group were Father Juan Carlos Aguirre, pastor of San Martin de Porres Parish in Sahuarita, who told about one of his parishioners, a woman with two small children, being stopped by five Pima County sheriff's cars for having a rosary hanging from her mirror. He and other interfaith leaders later met with Sheriff's officials to inform them of the incident.

Father Edgar Lopez, O.Carm, Parroquial Vicar at St. Cyril Parish in Tucson, shared his own journey as an undocumented immigrant from Guatemala to becoming a citizen and priest.

Other interfaith leaders who spoke were Methodist Pastor Beth Rambikur, who spoke of her successful visit with PCIC to the City Council this spring to prevent the doubling of low-income bus fares and Lutheran Pastor Steve Springer, who told of his involvement at last year's PCIC community accountability session that led to the renewed funding of JobPath, which has moved about 1,200 families from poverty through training and into living wage jobs.



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Photo provided to The New Vision.

Bishop Gerald Kicanas speaks with interfaith leaders .

Clergy from parishes from Yuma to Douglas participated and there are now four AIN groups – PCIC, Yuma County Interfaith Council, Pinal County Sponsoring Committee and Southern Arizona Interfaith (a sponsoring committee in Cochise, Santa Cruz and southern Pima County) working in the Diocese. Bishop Talmage concluded the session with a blessing and an invitation to clergy to do listening sessions in their congregations and focus on the development and training of young leaders to transform both their congregations and communities. Father Tom Tureman, S.D.S., pastor of Most Holy Trinity Parish in Tucson, also invited all present to attend a PCIC-sponsored Education Accountability Session with local and state candidates on Sunday, Sept. 28 at 4 p.m. at the parish, located at 1300 N. Greasewood Road.

Clara Dupnik is a member of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Tucson and the Pima County Interfaith Council Executive Team.