

# Compassion

Faith doing justice in the Central and Southern Province...and beyond

October 2018

## Protect Creation and Human Health - Take Action for Clean Cars and Clean Health

Clean car standards are needed to protect the environment and the health and well-being of people. But President Trump's Administration is rolling back regulations designed to reduce emissions from the transportation sector, and many faith groups are voicing their concerns about these new rules.

Here's a simple action that you can take to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4 (or up until October 23): Submit a comment on the "clean car" rule, officially known as the [Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient Vehicles Rule for Model Years 2021-2026 Passenger Cars and Light Trucks](#). This proposed rule seeks to eliminate the existing rule by the Obama Administration and agreed to by automakers in 2012, to increase the fuel economy of cars and light-duty trucks to 54.5 mpg by 2025. The Trump Administration proposes to freeze fuel efficiency standards to 2020 levels through 2026.

If this proposal replaces the existing one, the environment will be threatened. Among the potential impacts, studies indicate that the U.S. would consume *200 billion more gallons of gasoline and release two billion more metric tons of global warming gases* into our atmosphere by 2040. Further, the new proposal seeks to revoke the authority of states to put in place stronger fuel economy standards to protect human health.

Add your voice to others in the faith community. [Write and ask the Administration](#) to honor the existing rule and rescind this proposal. A template letter is provided in the link, but please edit and personalize it with your own voice and concerns. The public has until **October 23, 2018**, to provide comment.

## Novena for Migrant Families

In response to harsh new U.S. policies that have upended the lives of immigrant children and their parents, the Jesuit Social Research Institute (JSRI) and Loyola University New Orleans recently held a Novena for Migrant Families for the safety and well-being of migrant families.

The Jesuit Social Research Institute (JSRI) developed a prayer booklet for the novena, with the prayers, petitions,



and migrant stories to be read each day of the novena. The Novena for Migrant Families was prayed in a public space on Loyola's campus, facing a Christmas crèche scene to remind participants of the Holy Family, who like so many migrant families today, were forced to flee grave danger in their homeland. The crèche scene also served as a reminder that when love and hospitality is offered to migrant families, Christ himself is welcomed. Thanks to JSRI for sharing these materials with those who want to host their own Novena.

[Novena Digital Booklet PDF](#)

[Novena Print Booklet PDF](#)

[Novena Booklet Word Document](#)

## Social Grants Recipient Highlight: The Thensted Center, Grand Coteau, LA

Since 1982, the Thensted Center has responded to the needs of rural, underserved residents in St. Landry and Lafayette civil parishes in Louisiana. Its mission is to build up people of all ages and social backgrounds, without regard to race or religion, as they strive for healthier, more fulfilling and self-sufficient lives. Programming attends to the needs of more than 200 families annually – including children, the elderly, single parents, veterans, people with disabilities and homebound residents.

In June, Thensted Center received a small social grant to support its after school, elderly and emergency assistance programs. Thus far in the new school year, the grant has



funded tutoring, supplies and early evening meals for 36 young learners in the After School Tutoring Program who are working to strengthen their academic performance.

The grant has also helped to reduce the risk of isolation and hunger for 43 senior citizens through monthly gatherings with lunch service made possible by eight senior volunteers. In August, participants in the Empowering Seniors Program welcomed 17 students from neighboring Academy of the Sacred Heart and Berchmans Academy who led “Art to Heart” – an intergenerational activity led by the student volunteers to socialize and enjoy creative activities with local senior citizens.

The UCS Social Grant also supports emergency assistance for people facing financial crises. One such recipient was a single, working mother of three children who could not make ends meet. When the late summer heat increased her electric bill, she was short on funds to pay the bill in full. She worried over how to pay the bill and feed her family because her earnings exceed the qualification for food stamps. Thensted Center was able to match her contribution toward the electric bill and provide enough food to sustain her family until her next paycheck. Thensted Center’s operation and programming is largely supported by the generosity of volunteers and benefactors. To learn more, visit [www.thenstedcenter.org](http://www.thenstedcenter.org).

### **The Impact of Reconciliation: Courageous Conversations About Race**

As a way to do a deep dive into the issue of racial equity and disparities, four groups in the UCS Province are currently meeting to discuss Glen Singleton’s book *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Our Schools*. The protocol laid out in this book is designed to effectively engage, sustain and deepen interracial dialogue, aiming specifically at helping

educators address persistent racial disparities intentionally, explicitly and comprehensively.

In the forward to the book, Singleton states that “it is critical for educators to address racial issues in order to uncover personal and institutional biases that prevent all students, and especially students of color from reaching their fullest potential. *Courageous Conversation* serves as the essential strategy for school systems and other educational organizations to address racial disparities through safe, authentic, and effective cross-racial dialogue.”

This process was first introduced in the province in the fall of 2017 by Dr. Pete Musso, then the Director of School Support for the UCS Province. He facilitated monthly conference calls with representatives from some of our province pre-secondary and secondary schools, where they discussed the book and, more importantly, its possible application to their school realities. It was his hope that some of those school representatives would go on to facilitate the process in their own schools. That is happening now in three schools:

- Rockhurst High School, led by communication arts department chair Nicole Smith, with 11 participants including the school principal
- De Smet Jesuit High School, led by director of diversity and inclusion Catalina Martinez, with 12 participants, including two Jesuits
- Regis Jesuit High School, led by diversity director and Spanish teacher Christina Vela, with 28 participants, including the president, vice-president and principal.

The fourth group is made up of Kansas City-based colleagues who participated in the province Reconciliation Gathering from Rockhurst University, Rockhurst High School, and St. Francis Xavier Parish. The group meets monthly, led by Nicole Smith of Rockhurst High. Bill Kriege, the Director of Campus Ministry, is participating in that process and says this about the hopes of the group:

“We want to make this a priority. It won’t be a quick win, but even engaging in the conversation is a win. We know that in our schools there is both a performance gap and a participation gap between white students and students of color. One of the big things that we have is passion around changing this. This is a proactive way to address racial reconciliation – we can’t give into paralysis, so we will work on changing ourselves and our expectations.”

To find out more about how the *Courageous Conversations* model, go to <https://courageousconversation.com>. The book that these groups are using can be purchased at <https://courageousconversation.com/product/courageous-conversations-about-race-by-glenn-singleton/>. We’ll follow up in the spring by reporting some feedback and outcomes from the groups currently engaged in the process.