

## Project Dedication - Speech by Ann McEntee

I am so excited to finally be here to celebrate the dedication of the Gathering Place for Peace, the place that remembers what Jim McEntee stood for and worked for in Santa Clara County.

The Interfaith blessings truly reflected Jim's beliefs. Faith in God and belief in God's presence in every person is what permeated every part of Jim's life. Jim believed everyone was important. He lived his life as a priest, a Director of Human Relations for Santa Clara County, and as a husband and father to ensure peace, justice, dignity, and human rights for everyone. We as a community continue to reap the benefits of his love and his work. This Gathering Place for Peace is not however just a way to remember Jim. It is a reminder that we must continue to reach out to each other and work to ensure that we as individuals and as a community promote respect, love, dignity, and justice toward each one – beyond any borders of ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

The Jim McEntee Legacy Committee and myself want to thank the County of Santa Clara and the Board of Supervisors who named the plaza for Jim and helped and supported us through each step (financially and philosophically). This project would never have happened were it not for them. A special thanks to Blanca Alvarado, who took a lead early on to encourage and advise the committee and to help organize public hearings to decide what should be named for Jim. It was at those hearings that the community expressed that this plaza would be very appropriate because here was where Jim brought the community and county government together – for Unity and Diversity days, events after 9-11, and various ethnic celebrations.

As we began this project, the committee with the artist, Carlos Perez, set up twelve listening sessions – encompassing the various ethnic, religious, and cultural community groups, including:

- the Sikh community,
- the Filipino community,
- the Vietnamese community,
- the Gay-Lesbian-Bisexual-Transgender community,
- the Hispanic community,
- the Muslim community,
- the Jewish community,
- Jim's seminarian classmates,
- and the McEntee family.

We listened to everyone. Various groups mentioned that Jim always had time to listen to them. That is why we have the eight benches facing each other, to remember what Jim did and also so we can sit and listen to one another. Jim was a peacemaker – so the symbols of the peace doves in the middle of the square. The Sikh community mentioned that Jim worked with them and the City Council and the neighborhood using his conflict resolution skills to help all of them to work towards a win-win solution while building the guadwara off of Quimby. The Sikhs said that he taught them how to go out to the neighbors and listen to them and to this day they have a good relationship. Others mentioned how Jim helped them to reconcile when there were opposing factions within their own groups. He often was out at 11:00 PM or 2:00 AM to help bring these groups to a peaceful non-violent result.

Way back in the 60's and 70's before the need was recognized and acceptable, Jim reached out to work for justice for marginalized groups who were discriminated against:

- the farm workers (marching in the various marches, and also leading the prayers with the people in Salinas when Cesar was in jail,
- starting the South County Transportation Association,
- and the housing project Village Avanté),
- the homeless (starting Emergency Housing Consortium EHC),
- the gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender community (defending them in the Measure A & B and the Knight Initiative issues),
- the Hispanic community (working for a peaceful resolve with the community and the police after the Fiesta de las Rosas and the police shootings to bring better understanding and cooperation).
- Then later on with the various ethnic and religious groups (the start of the Hate Free Community)

All of this is reflected in all the tiles around the square and branching out – He brought all of us together to love, live, and work together as members of God’s family.

Jim was a wonderful husband and father. He also brought the family together, whether it was for a mass for deceased members, birthday celebrations – always calling family members on their birthdays, and also influencing all of us to reach out to the marginalized and those in need. Today the family is carrying on his legacy

- serving the farm workers and low income patients as a doctor,
- representing workers as a lawyer,
- bringing equity in our schools as a teacher or administrator,
- and helping in various organizations to bring justice to the homeless, to the hungry and to the many marginalized groups.

I also want to thank the many donors–

- the major donors Applied Materials – who sponsored the window (due to unforeseen technical difficulties this won’t be in for two weeks, but please look at the large scale mock-ups, both inside and out to get a preview),
- Gertrude Welch – who sponsored the peace doves in the center of the square.
- The eight bench donors
  - o Asian Law Alliance, Castellano Family Foundation,
  - o Michael Fox, Sr.,
  - o Diocese of San Jose,
  - o the McKenna Family,
  - o St. John Vianney Catholic Community,
  - o Bob and Nancy Weeks,
  - o and Susie Wilson.

A special thanks goes to all the donors, large and small, for the financial support and also for all those who gave advice, stories, and actual voluntary help. I want to acknowledge Debra Duran, who spent many hours helping us get all the details correct. Working with Carlos Perez and Jim Morales has also been a gift to this committee. Andrea will speak about these folks a little later in the program, but we are especially indebted to them.

Thanks also to the Jim McEntee Legacy Committee for many hours of work creating this project, and special thanks to Jim’s hero and mentor, Gertrude Welch, who started this project in the first place and whose generous gift after her death made this day possible.