



Reflection from Fr. Don Farnan

URBAN CONNECTION

I salute those who live, learn, work, worship, dine, or do volunteer activities in the inner city. Urban centers tend to get abandoned by sprawling populations, but we know that, just as with a human body, the core must be strengthened so that the rest of the body can stay strong. The more we stay connected to the heart of the city, the better our entire metropolitan area will be. Consider this an invitation to drive along the Troost corridor and stop in at some of the many places that are revitalizing our inner city.

Troost Avenue, site of Rockhurst University, is transforming from a line of division to a place of gathering. Along it are numerous minority-owned diners with delicious cuisine. Traveling north on the 7000 block you encounter Café Reflections which also has a culinary school (7016); in the 6000s is Niece's, known for its comforting soul food (6441); in the 5000s is one of the best bakeries in all of Kansas City (Blackhole at 5531); in the 4000s you'll find terrific coffee shops including Equal Minded Café (4327) and Anchor Island (4101); in the 3000s is One City Café (3936) and Thelma's Kitchen (3101) that serve hungry and homeless citizens as well as those who help them.

Coming back south, we might get overwhelmed by the many social agencies on Troost that provide opportunities to volunteer. A sampling includes Operation Breakthrough (3039), a children's center for learning that also invests in their families. Journey To New Life (3120) assists those who are reentering society after incarceration. Troost 39 Thrift Store (3922) sells to neighbors clothing, art, books, furniture, small appliances, and just about every household item imaginable; proceeds benefit the neighborhood, thanks to many donors throughout the metro area. Community LINC (4012) helps thousands of homeless families gain skills and support to achieve housing with a goal of ending homelessness in KC. Closer to Rockhurst (5200) and associated with the University through the Alivn Brooks Center for Faith Justice, are programs that assist urban residents maneuver through legal issues (Neighborhood Justice Center), gain financial literacy (Prosperity Center), strengthen academic skills (Hurtado Scholars), reduce crime (KC Common Good), and help teens gain life skills (Youth Ambassadors).

Not just UMKC and Rockhurst, but there are academic institutions along Troost for every level of learning from pre-school to technical training and graduate programs, as well as tremendous businesses like Pawsperity (5804), formerly The Grooming Project, that trains underprivileged women to become entrepreneurs, managers, administrators, and even business owners. The Catholic Churches on Troost, Saint James at 39th and Saint Francis Xavier at 52nd, like many other worship sites on the avenue, are lay-managed, justice-minded, praise-centered places that encourage congregants to put faith into action in meaningful ways through both practical works (from bus-stop and through-the-cracks ministries to community gardens) and systemic challenges (from immigration to racism to gun violence). Perhaps the most profound entity on the street or in the city is Reconciliation Services at 31st and Troost that helps citizens take one step closer to independence and interdependence through ID acquisitions to mental health services. Their mission to accept people as children of God and accompany them to become more self-sufficient and productive; it is an anchor for all else that happens in KC's core.

Sprinkled along the corridor are green spaces and beautification projects, strong neighborhood associations, historic buildings and sites, and people working together to make a better Kansas City at the heart. At 48th and Troost is the Gorman Conservation Center and Kaufmann Legacy Park that link the central city with more upscale districts. We are all linked; we are all one. I have, of course, only mentioned some of the many outstanding spots along Troost. If you haven't visited our city's center recently, I hope that you will do so, even get nourished at a church, restaurant, or volunteer site there. If I can aid you in connecting or reconnecting to the heart of the city, I would like to do so.