



Just Notes

A newsletter from the Life, Peace and Justice Commission for the Diocese of Reno, Nevada

Summer 2008 Volume 2, Issue 1

Statement of Purpose for the Commission:

We, the Life, Peace, and Justice Commission, attest to the unity we share in the Body of Christ through the Holy Spirit. In solidarity, directed by Catholic Social Teaching and inspired by Scripture, we commit ourselves to encourage our parish communities to work for justice and peace. We speak for the voiceless in our community and world, seeking to advocate for the dignity of all and promote the unity that we share as the creation of a loving God.



Walking the Walk

Key Themes of our Catholic Social Teaching

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Call to Family, Community and Participation

Rights and Responsibilities

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Solidarity

Care for God's Creation

The JustFaith Program

The Diocesan *JustFaith* Program concluded with a closing celebration liturgy on Sunday, June 1st, at Bishop Manogue High School, with Bishop Straling presiding. The JF participants prayed, sang, and formalized their commitment to work for social justice. Everyone who completed the thirty week program received a medallion inscribed with the letters JF.

Facilitator Commentaries:

St. Francis of Assisi Judy Grassilli

The St. Francis of Assisi *JustFaith* group spent time this past year looking for ways that we could implement and supplement Catholic social teaching in our local area of north Lake Tahoe.

We learned about local poverty and hunger from George LeBard of Project Mana, a local agency that distributes food in the Incline, Kings Beach and Truckee areas. Emilio Vaca, head of the Family Resource Center in Kings Beach, made us aware of the impact that the lack

of affordable housing has had in this area for service workers.

During one of our border crossing/immersion experiences we listened to clients from Tahoe Women's Services talk about how spousal and child abuse have impacted their lives. Low wages and poverty and the resulting strain on family life are contributing factors for the prevalence of domestic abuse in our local communities.

We also listened to personal stories from members of our Hispanic community of St. Francis. This was done as a way to begin to connect with them and to also learn about first-hand experiences of emigrating into this country and the impact it has

had on their lives. The need to provide for their families and the inability to find work in their own country was the overwhelming reason why most of them entered this country. We attended an immigration information session on obtaining legal residency and learned of the pitfalls many of the undocumented immigrants experience trying to obtain legal status, as well as the inadequacies of our immigration laws.

We were challenged and transformed by the *JustFaith* journey and we look forward to continuing our work on social justice issues in our local community.

Companions on the Journey Rita Sloan

A group of us from St. Rose of Lima parish, and one from Our Lady of the Snows parish met at a speaking event in September of 2007, where Dan Driscoll of *JustFaith* spoke on the biblical call for justice and peace.

Eight of us were inspired to make a commitment to the *JustFaith* process and made

plans that very day, to meet within the week to begin planning our 30 week journey together.

We named our group Companions on the Journey and our journey has included faith-sharing, community-building, education, experiential "immersion" events, prayer, and friendship. We have been startled, challenged and called by the plight of the marginalized people of today's world as we increasingly understand our

connection to the whole world.

Our *JustFaith* sessions ended in May of 2008, but that was simply the end of the beginning. The journey continues because we know that God calls us to remain faithful to the gospel, to serve the common good, to always keep the poorest among us most prominent in all that we do, and to be guided always by love for all God's creation.

Upcoming Events

Reno Cardboard
Box City
Wingfield Park
Sept. 26-27, 2008
Info: Family Promise
775-284-5566

Published by:

The Life, Peace
and Justice
Commission
Rev. Chuck Durante
Fran McMillen
Co-chairs

Edited by:

Elizabeth Reville

Writers:

Nancy Childress
Julie Ehrman
Judy Grassilli
Rita Sloan
Rev. Chuck Durante

Holy Cross Church

Julie Ehrman:

Holy Cross started with six people from our parish and three from Our Lady of Wisdom. After the first couple of weeks, due to scheduling conflicts, our group consisted of five Holy Cross parishioners for our first year of *JustFaith*. But what a lovely group of People, to work, learn and journey with!

St. Teresa of Avila

Nancy Childress:

There were 22 parishioners from St. Teresa of Avila parish who completed the *JustFaith* process in May. After building community in our opening retreat, our three groups continued on the journey, learning about social justice issues and experiencing the homeless and poor.

We met once a week for 30 weeks where we prayed and discussed the assigned books and videos. We heard speakers from Catholic Relief Services,

JUSTFAITH: A Pastor's Perspective

Fr. Chuck Durante

As I reflect on the process called "*JustFaith*," which was newly a part of our diocese this past year, it brings great joy and excitement. We had 22 people, in three groups, who participated in *JustFaith* this year at St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Community!

One hesitation a pastor always has in starting something new in his parish is the question of whether this is going to take a lot of his time or time from his staff, all of whom generally already have a packed schedule. I found that this process was designed well

All of us learned new things throughout the process. Catholic Social Teaching, racism, local and global poverty, war and reconciliation, simple living, and caring for our environment are only a few of the topics we touched on.

Sometimes it was a challenge to finish the reading for the week, but we all agreed that it was worth it. We also learned about new places where we can use our talents.

For example, some of our

Nevada Hispanic Services, Bread for the World, and the Mentor Center, who both challenged and enlightened us about the issues of global poverty, racism, and the need for mentors in our local community.

We gained the most personal growth through our border/crossing immersion experiences by meeting and interacting with the homeless of Carson City, and spending a Saturday helping to build homes in Dayton through Citizens for Affordable Housing. These important face-to-face interactions helped us relate to what we were

and with such great detail, that my required involvement was minimal.

It was essential that we had two people very committed to the overall facilitation of *JustFaith* in our parish, but they surely did not have to create what was to happen at their weekly gatherings.

The texts and materials were excellent in presenting a format for learning about the social teaching of our Church and the many challenges that exist among the people of God who are poor or marginalized. This not only is made real in readings, discussion and prayer, but also through hands on, face-to-face meetings with folks who are struggling. Perhaps this is the real genius in the process.

members help feed the homeless twice a month and stay with guest families when our parish hosts homeless families through Family Promise.

Our members also write letters to our congressional delegates on pending issues and coordinate our parish's involvement in Family Promise. And I have no doubt that there will be other needs that will be met by our *JustFaith* participants.

reading by learning about the real world experiences of the people living around us.

Our journey began last October and many of us grew in ways we could not have imagined and we are thankful for the opportunity to have experienced this program.

Although 30 weeks is a large commitment, it was well worth the time and effort. There were moments when we laughed a lot and cried a lot, as we walked in unity with Jesus Christ as he opened us up to a different way of viewing our community and the world.

When we enter into relationship with others, it changes us – and I can say it changed the good folks who went through *JustFaith* at St. Teresa's.

My only frustration was that I did not have the time to participate as fully as I would have liked. It has been said many times that "Catholic Social Teaching is the best kept secret in the Church." I can say that it is definitely not a secret in the lives and families of those who went through this process.

I applaud their efforts and encourage every parish to consider starting this process soon. The limits of what can happen for your people and the greater community in which you live are as boundless as the gospel!