

Parish Social Ministry Workshop
October 4, 2015
Recap

On October 4th, Respect Life Sunday and the Feast of St. Francis, 50 parishioners gathered for an afternoon of spiritual inspiration, reflections on Laudato Si' and parish social ministry training. *Everything is Connected: Called to Go Forth* was an opportunity to pause and pray for inspiration, deepen the spiritual roots of our work, reshape-refresh-and renew our ministry as well as connect with companions in parish ministries of life, social concerns and peace and justice. This workshop from the Office of Life, Justice & Peace, was offered as a follow-up to the Social Action Summer Institute (SASI) to share lessons in sustaining our ministry. *A flash drive containing the presentations at SASI was given out to each parish.*

- Sandy Martinez (Ascension Catholic Church) opened with song – *Open My Eyes* – and Fr. Bill Edens (St. Philip Neri) followed with an opening prayer before Martinez set the tone for the afternoon with *Holy Spirit, Come Now*.
- Goals for the day and expectations were shared by Kimberly Mazyck, Relationship Manager for National Partners with Catholic Relief Services.
- Matt Cato, Director of the Office of Life, Justice & Peace, summarized the topics of SASI before offering a reflection on the *Human Side of Ecology*. Some key points stated include: Life and dignity of the human person is the foundational principle of our faith. We are part of creation. Caring for God's creation includes protecting people and the planet as we all live in relationship together. Ecology is the relationship of everything in one system of life. Human ecology is the discipline that focuses on humans and their interactions with their environments. For example, human values, wealth, life-styles, resource use, and waste, to name a few. Ecology is much more than Environmentalism. Ecology must include humans; it needs to start with the human person as the center, as its focal point. That is our Catholic faith: ecology is human-centric. Five steps to consider in working toward Justice:
 1. **Stewardship:** Are we being responsible stewards of creation?
 2. **The Poor and Vulnerable:** How does this impact the poor and vulnerable?
 3. **The Common Good:** What is best for the greatest number of people?
 4. **Solidarity:** Who is our neighbor and how does this affect our neighbor, who we see and are unseen; who live today and will live tomorrow?
 5. **Economic Development:** Are man and creation being served by economic development?

So while our foundational principle is Life, Care for Creation is firmly cemented atop this bedrock principle. We give priority to mankind but good ecological choices are necessary to guarantee the dignity of the person, his or her fundamental rights, and their very existence. In a human-centric ecology, protecting creation is a justice issue. If you want peace, work for justice, justice for the human person; justice for all creation. Change begins with each one of us; within each one of us.

- Small groups formed around specific topics that were addressed at SASI: Laudato Si, Global Solidarity, Catholic Social Teaching, Life and Dignity of the Person, Poverty, Environmental Justice, Racism and Water Participants shared what passion, call to service, or gift the Holy Spirit recognized in them and what might be their Gospel response to the issue they chose.
- Fair Trade Chocolate was enjoyed at each table and Eileen Sleva, a Fair Trade Ambassador, shared the importance of supporting Fair Trade.
- Kim Mazyck presentation on Spiritual Roots: Everything is Connected included personal stories of connectedness in her work in Africa and questions for participants:

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Sunday's workshop was designed so that the discussions would not end when the day ended. Since ministry work is not focused on tasks but on the process, the journey we embark upon, and the people we serve, Mazyck revealed that we want our emphasis to be on conversation – to talk with each other and to listen to the people who we are serving by first asking about them and then asking about their needs.

Kim reminded us that people in parish ministry may forget that their work is faith-based. The spiritual focus of our ministry work must always take precedence over results and agendas. She emphasized the spiritual roots of ministry work by illustrating how we are all connected; everything is connected. (Universal connection is the essence of *Solidarity*, a principle of Catholic social teaching.) She reminded us of the attention paid to Pope Francis's visit to the United States and the energy it generated among Catholics and non-Catholics. We felt connected.

Mazyck observed that Pope Francis continually asked people to pray for him. Then she challenged the participants, "How do we do that for each other."

If everyone is connected, then what about those who feel disconnected? Zacchaeus, the tax collector, was alone (and short) so he had to climb a tree to see Jesus before Jesus included him, and Zacchaeus was connected with God (Luke 19:1-10).

Who is excluded from our circle and has to climb a tree because no one will make room for him or her? How can we bring them into our circles? Mazyck's advice is to listen to the Holy Spirit and through the Holy Spirit, recognize the gifts in one another, and personally invite others into your circle.

- Break out groups of parishes/vicariates formed as we moved from the spiritual to the practical. Considering what was shared by the presenters, groups worked together on which passions/gifts/service areas they will focus on. They identified specific issues and approaches and shared ideas of how to get their parish/vicariate connected and how to move from committee to ministry.
- Moving Forward and Evaluating: Kim reminded participants to listen to the people being served; have conversations. Instead of being task-focused, consider the process and journey. Build relationships/teams and build structures.
- Tools: Matt Cato shared tools for the ministry: CRS Rice Bowl, Fair Trade, Catholics Confront Global Poverty, CCHD, Laudato Si (Including a Parish Faith-Sharing Guide for Lent [or any 6-week period]), Mailing lists, Facebook/Social Media, USB from SASI (handed out to each parish), Parish Survey to determine actual needs.
- Highlighting the need to inquire and listen, Fr. Edens asked the participants to pair up where each person shared what they needed prayers for before their partners prayed over them. Edens then offered a Commissioning Prayer before Martinez closed the workshop with *I Can Sing of Your Love Forever*.

Photos by Sandy Martinez





Environmental
Justice













