

Seeds of Justice

Sowers of Justice Newsletter

APRIL, 2001



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“MORE THAN JUST A MEAL”

So when he had washed their feet (and) put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. John 13:12-15

As this issue of *Seeds* arrives in your mailbox, the season of Lent draws to a close and the Church makes ready for the solemnity of Triduum (Holy Week). Each of us has done what we could with Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Ready or not, we move on as a community of faith to enter into the sacred days of Triduum.

The passage above is from the gospel for the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper. The message is simple: for disciples of Jesus Christ, it is more than just a meal. While at table to share a meal, Jesus gave his followers a new model. His example established a new way of doing things where masters will be servants and the lowly will be lifted up. The old way will be transformed and made new.

His disciples had a hard time with this new model. First, Peter did not want anything washed; then, he wanted everything washed. Eventually, ready or not, they too had to respond to the model of Jesus and carry out the mission. Discipleship had to be more than just a meal. The transformation that occurs in sharing the meal finds fullness in the transformation that occurs when we serve others. Jesus made it clear

that it was not always easy or comfortable, but it was essential for discipleship.

We too have a hard time with this model. We draw comfort and support when we gather for the meal in our Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. We might even get a taste of the transformation promised with the food from the table. However, do we really live out our faith with the understanding that it is more than just a meal? How does participation in the life of the parish and the work of Sowers of Justice make the connection between the meal and the mission? We diminish the transformation of the meal when we fail to work at transforming the world in the model of Jesus Christ.

In the last few months in particular, including much of Lent, many Sowers of Justice members have worked hard to provide leadership and opportunities in parishes throughout the archdiocesan network. The message that "it is more than just the meal" has been manifested in the following Sowers events and actions.

- ò While the last notes of the closing song were still ringing in the worship space,

(Continued on page 2)

parishioners went forth “to love and serve the Lord” by sitting down at tables to write letters to elected officials about housing, welfare reform, child care and investments instead of just tax cuts and rebates. Almost 2000 letters have been generated so far.

- ò Sowers members joined hundreds of people of faith for a housing rally, the JRLC Day on the Hill and a labor-community town hall meeting. Many of the participants added a visit with elected officials to press the point even further.
- ò More than 100 Sowers members participated in the Sowers Institute for Social Justice at the Basilica and

- ò The Sowers delegate assembly is closing in on its first year with progress and promise in strengthening the support structure of the network.

These examples demonstrate both the tremendous growth and the potential of the Sowers network. In the relationship between meal and mission we are called to bring the transforming experience of mission to the celebration of the Eucharist meal.

In order to sustain our efforts at mission, we need the nourishment that comes from music, Word, preaching, food from the table and each other.

Jesus gave us a new model—one in which the meal and the mission both matter for authentic discipleship. Both may make us uncomfortable. Both will take hard work. Both will be essential if our activities are to transform the world to reflect God’s reign of justice as exemplified in Jesus Christ.

As Sowers members we prepare to celebrate the sacred Triduum in our parishes. Let us model for those around us the example of Jesus in John’s gospel. *Discipleship is more than just a meal.*

Michael Griffin

**“To receive in truth
the Body and Blood
of Christ given up
for us, we must
recognize Christ
in the poorest,
his (people)”**

Catechism of the Catholic Church #1397

**Jesus gave us a new model—
one in which the meal and
the mission both matter
for authentic discipleship.**

**Both may make us uncomfortable.
Both will take hard work.**

St. Peter Claver. Learning more about Catholic social teaching and developing skills for public advocacy, these Sowers leaders were invigorated by their common experience with prayer, fellowship and passion for social justice. They bring back to their parishes the strengthened realization that the meal must be connected to the mission.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: MID-SESSION

The 2001 legislative session has been unusually slow in terms of getting bills into the committee hearing process. While the session is constitutionally scheduled to end by May 21, most capitol watchers expect the legislature to go into special session. A status report of the top legislative issues included in the Sower's of Justice agenda follows.

Housing: There are two major pieces of legislation. SF1190/HF1619 is the funding bill. This increases the biennial investment in affordable housing to \$322 million. Home ownership and the development of rental housing would be expanded.

SF 1217 would require all developers to set aside a certain percentage of units as affordable. Those using public subsidies be required to target their units at an even greater level of affordability. In exchange, developers would receive density bonuses and other regulatory relief to reduce the cost of each unit. The House version of this bill is considerably weaker.

Welfare Reform: The two major issues, time limit extensions and stalling efforts to increase sanctions, are included in a variety of bills. In large part we support the Governor's initiative HF1257/SF 1673 on extending welfare benefits for all of those who are cooperating with their employment plan, restoring benefits to legal immigrants and indexing the MFIP exit level to inflation. We do not support his effort to increase sanctions to 50%. We face major opposition to our agendas in the House.

Immigration: The Governor's Welfare Bill includes restoring food and welfare benefits to immigrants who are scheduled to lose them July

2001 (cash) and July 2002 (food). The Senate will probably support this position; the House will probably oppose this provision.

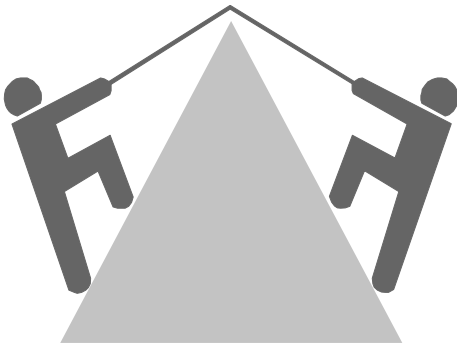
SAVE (Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements) was intended to verify the legal status and report findings to the INS when immigrants apply for benefits. The Governor proposes repealing the law because it may have a chilling effect on families applying for health care assistance and other benefits for which they are eligible. There is significant opposition in the House to any reversal.

Health Care: Annually, 70,000 children are without health insurance in Minnesota. The Governor's proposal is to incrementally move to full coverage by 2005. Senator Moe has argued for universal coverage on a fast track.

SF765/HF 944 would increase the ability of all Minnesotans without prescription drug coverage to afford prescription drugs by establishing the Fair Drug Pricing Program. This bill has passed the Senate committee. Drug manufacturers would be required to give price rebates to those who are part of the Fair Drug Pricing Program saving between 15-30% of the costs.

Campaign Finance Reform: Senator Hottinger's bill SF 388/HF 567 is the most comprehensive proposal in that it 1) provides full public financing for candidates who qualify; 2) places limits on the size of contributions to political parties and legislative caucuses and 3) provides candidates with additional resources to respond to independent expenditures. The Senate will press on, although the House has decided not to hear bills this session.

Kathleen Tomlin



As the session unfolds, the status of bills will change often. To track bills over the internet, log onto:

<http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/legis.htm>

PEOPLE AND PARISHES AT WORK

Sowers of Justice have been keeping the United States Postal Service, state legislators, and the Governor himself quite busy!

Since the start of the legislative session, a number of Sowers leadership teams have coordinated letter-writing campaigns in their parishes. After masses, they have provided interested parishioners with pen, paper, envelopes, postage, and information on the issues. Some parishes have written their state legislators to urge them to invest the tax surplus. Some have written Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe and Speaker of the House Steve Sviggum asking for their support for affordable housing. Others have written the governor himself. (A guy has to have something to do in between XFL broadcasts, after all...)

Some letter writing campaigns have yielded as many as 125 letters. These campaigns are a great way to reach well beyond the established Sowers members and involve the whole community in the work of justice. They can also be an effective recruiting tool. Who's to stop leaders from talking with parishioners about joining Sowers of Justice while they nibble at a doughnut and share their views on the issues with elected officials?

Parishes who have participated in letter writing campaigns include:

Christ the King, Minneapolis
St. Mary of the Lake, Plymouth
St. Thomas the Apostle, Minneapolis
Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Hastings
Nativity, Bloomington
Cathedral, Saint Paul
St. Michael, Farmington
Nativity of Our Lord, St. Paul
Transfiguration, Oakdale
Guardian Angels, Oakdale

If your parish has done a letter writing campaign, let us know! Contact Michael Griffin at 651-291-4490. We'll list your parish in the next edition of Parishes at Work!



Sowers of Justice in Washington County are thinking and acting locally! In February, parishioners from **Guardian Angels, Transfiguration, St. Ambrose, and St. Thomas Aquinas** gathered at Transfiguration to kick off the Washington County Project. The project is an effort to bring Sowers leaders from Washington County together to work on issues of common concern.

The group spent much of the evening in small group discussions. Each group addressed two different questions. First, participants were asked, "If we work together in a campaign, how will our communities, our county, and our state look different?" Then, participants were asked, "If we work together, how do we want our parishes to be different?" These discussions helped people focus on the issue of affordable housing. The conversations also helped the group think about the work they need to do to take effective action in the public arena.

At the end of the evening, participants formed three working groups. The steering committee will be responsible for deepening relationships among leaders, identifying a common action to take by fall, 2001, and identifying how the campaign should grow over time. The working group on parish organizing committed to doing some internal organizing within their own parishes. They will spend time hearing parishioners concerns and identifying leadership

**Most of the things
worth doing in the
world had been
declared impossible
before they were
done.**

Justice Louis Brandeis

PARISHES AT WORK (continued)



for the campaign. The housing action group will identify a strategy that will engage leaders in a research process that will help the campaign identify a smaller part of the affordable housing problem to address in Washington County. All three groups are already hard at work!



Members of **Christ the King** parish in Minneapolis are hard at work on the affordable housing issue. In mid-March, parishioner Adele Della Torre hosted an inaugural District Dialogue with members of the Metropolitan Council in her home. Council member Frank Hornstein, who represents Della Torre's neighborhood on the Met Council, and Council Chair Ted Mondale, both attended. The meeting included time for informal dialogue with council members.

Participants also learned the details of a Met Council proposal to tie funding for transportation and infrastructure to a community's success in developing affordable housing. The Council wants to award points to cities based on the amount of affordable housing they have developed. The points will determine how much Met Council money that community receives for other needs.

On the heels of that meeting, ten members of **Christ the King** attended a Met Council hearing. The Council heard testimony from public officials and citizens. Seven or eight of those from the parish took the opportunity to testify.

The **Church of Saint John Neumann in Eagan** has been working at the local level on affordable housing. Over the past few years, they have met with members of the Metropolitan Council and the state legislature. Recently, they have turned their attention to the Eagan City Council. Along with other congregations, they provided input as the city developed its comprehensive plan for housing.

In February, 185 residents of Eagan, including several members from St. John Neumann, presented a petition signed by 575 citizens to the city council to demonstrate growing concern regarding affordable housing. Parishioners at St. John Neumann worked hard to secure many of these signatures. The parish then hosted a breakfast with several developers and public officials to discuss what other communities had done to build affordable housing as a way of providing public officials in Eagan with a sense of what they might do in their own community.

The Pastor, Rev. Bob Schwartz, was very involved in these efforts. He preached a homily on the affordable housing crisis during advent. He devoted a column in the bulletin to the topic. He wrote fellow clergy in Eagan urging them to take a stand on the issue, and he exchanged letters with the mayor of Eagan, Patricia Awada, challenging her to take some leadership in addressing the problem in the community.

Matt Gladue

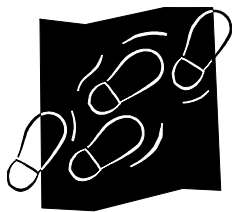
MOVING FROM CHARITY TO JUSTICE

Parishioners at Saint Luke in Saint Paul have long been involved in both the work of direct service and the work of justice. Last summer, St. Lukers were getting prepared to work to change affordable housing policy at the same time they were preparing to build a Habitat for Humanity house.

The social justice committee decided to take advantage of the situation. They arranged to make a power point presentation regarding the affordable housing crisis to Habitat volunteers during their lunch break on the construction site. The presentation highlighted the scope of the affordable housing problem and the public policies at the root of the problem. They also outlined concrete policy solutions. The committee then asked volunteers to fill out an evaluation that included a question that asked volunteers to express interest in working on issues of affordable housing policy.

About half of the volunteers expressed an interest. Members of the committee then met individually with these volunteers to determine the roots of their interest in housing and the depth of the commitment they wanted to make to work on the issue.

Those meetings were followed by specific invitations: invitations to attend public meetings the parish sponsored with local and state decision makers; invitations to visit with area business leaders to hear their concerns about



housing; invitations to do legislative advocacy. The volunteers were walking on both feet!

So here are the crucial steps of the Saint Luke's process:

EDUCATE—

Find stories, facts, and other information that provides volunteers with a sense of the scope of the problem they're trying to address through direct service.

EVALUATE—

Give volunteers some time to reflect on their direct service experience and some time to share their thoughts on your educational effort. Ask them if they want to get involved in the work of justice.

RELATIONSHIPS—

Meet individually with volunteers who express an interest in justice work. Why is this issue important to them? Who are they? What do they value? What do they want to happen on this issue?

INVITE—

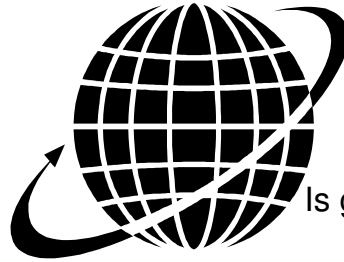
Ask volunteers to do something specific for justice. Ask them to write a letter, schedule a meeting with a public official, or attend a meeting of a local organization.

Matthew Gladue,

***"Service and action,
charity and justice
are complementary
components of
parish social ministry.
Neither alone
is sufficient; both are
essential signs of the
gospel at work"***

Communities of Salt and Light, 1993
U.S. Bishops

Events



Earth Day Event—April 22

Science Museum of Minnesota

NOON—5 p.m.

Are we stewards of the earth?
Is global climate change an issue of faith?

This year's Earth Day, April 22, will provide an opportunity to reflect on these questions. The Interfaith Climate Change Campaign is promoting a **FREE** event to be held at the Science Museum. People can listen to featured speaker, WCCO meteorologist Paul Douglas, and spend time looking at "Polar Thaw", the acclaimed photography exhibit that illustrates the impact of climate change already being felt.

Admission is **FREE**, but you must register in advance by calling the office of the Minnesota Council of Churches (612-870-3600).

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Basilica of St. Mary
Thursday, May 24, 2001
7:00 p.m.

The Twin Cities Campaign to Lift Sanctions is organizing another Interfaith Candlelight Service for the People of Iraq at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis.

If you would like to join with others in support for lifting the sanctions for the people of Iraq call Marie Braun at 612-552-1861 for more information.



Sowers Delegate Assembly

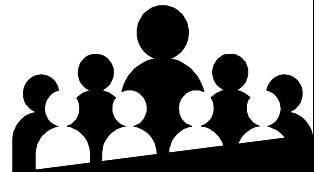
April 26, 2001

Hayden Center Building—Smith Hall
328 West Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55102

6:00 p.m. pizza supper—call 651-291-4477 to RSVP

6:30 p.m. program

9:00 p.m. adjourn



Mother's Day Rally for "Sensible Guns Laws and Safe Kids"

May 13, 2001 at the State Capitol

1:00 — 3:00 p.m.

This event is sponsored by the Minnesota Million Mom March, whose mission is to prevent gun death and injury, and to support victims and survivors of gun trauma.

Every person concerned about sensible gun laws and safe kids is invited to attend this year's rally. The way to change attitudes and laws is to do it at the grassroots level. Real change happens at home, in our cities and states. We must lift every voice to effect social change in Minnesota.

For more information please call 612-202-8177.



*Sow for yourselves justice,
reap the fruit of faithful love;*

*Break up for yourselves
a new field, for it is
time to seek the Lord,
until the Lord comes
and rains down justice
upon you.*

Hosea, 10:12

Sowers of Justice
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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Good Works: A Conference on Labor and Faith

May 1-2, 2001

Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church
1669 North Arcade, St. Paul, Minnesota

The Twin Cities Religion and Labor Network will sponsor a conference, May 1-2, on "Good Works: A Conference on Labor and Faith.

Keynote speaker: Kim Bobo, Founder and Executive Director of the National Interfaith Commission for Worker Justice

Kim Bobo has worked with religious and social justice groups for over twenty years. Her work is now dedicated to educating and mobilizing the religious community to work for improved wages, benefits, and working conditions for low-wage workers.

Kim is also the author of two books: *Lives Matter: A Handbook for Christian Organizing* and *Organizing for Social Change: A Manual for Activists in the '90's*.

Wednesday, May 2, will be a day of learning and discussion including a morning keynote, lunch, workshops, music, and opportunities to act.

Sowers of Justice who want to make a difference in the lives of low-wage workers should not miss this event. It is an excellent opportunity to learn and build relationships with our brothers and sisters in the labor movement. See you there?

Continuing education credits will be available. For further information, or to receive a brochure, please call: Bob Hulteen at 612-501-9186 or e-mail him at bobhulteen@aol.com.

Tuesday, May 1 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 2 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**SAVE
THESE
DATES!**