



Seeds of Justice

Sowers of Justice Newsletter

JUNE, 2005

Inside this Issue

WE ARE CALLED TO CONNECTION NOT GUILT 1

PUBLIC POLICY
Again, Minnesotans Await the Outcome..... 3

ACTING FOR JUSTICE
People and Parishes at Work..... 4

SKILLS
Focus Conversation Training..... 6

Local Resources on Palestine/Israel Peace..... 6

RESOURCES AND EVENTS..... 7

MARK YOUR CALENDARS 8

WE ARE CALLED TO CONNECTION *NOT GUILT*

About a year ago I was rinsing off some dishes in the kitchen sink when my six year old son Conor, said: “Mom, stop running so much water!” “The longer we run our water, the farther some people have to walk for theirs.” I turned off the faucet and we talked about how everybody in the world needs clean water.

It can be overwhelming to think of the needs of everybody in the world. We all know that everyone needs access to clean water. But according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), more than a billion people continue to live and work in abject poverty with no access to clean and safe drinking water. The U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development estimates that every year three to five million people die from water-related diseases in the underdeveloped nations of the world.

In developing countries, 6 million children die each year, mostly from hunger-related causes. The world’s \$40 trillion global economy is characterized by dramatic developmental differences and stark contrasts among the world’s 6.2 billion inhabitants. According to the United Nations, 3 billion people live on less than \$2 a day.

It can also be overwhelming to think about the needs that are close to home. For example, in Minnesota, an estimated 10,600 children are either homeless or living in temporary arrangements on any given night. In the United States, 13 million children live in households

where people have to skip meals or eat less to make ends meet.

What affect do these statistics have on you? What happens when you become aware of the suffering of others? Does this awareness propel you to find out more and to pray for God’s guidance as you discern your response?

Awareness is the most powerful and essential first step in beginning to affect change. Awareness of suffering compels us to ask: Is this how God wants people to live? Is this the world as it should be? Waking up to the reality around us is the first step in expanding our thinking and understanding of social justice.

The next step on this journey is discerning the action we should take. You quickly realize that compassion requires action.

When we look squarely at injustice and get involved, we actually feel less pain, not more, because we overcome the gnawing guilt and despair that festers under our numbness.

Desmond Tutu
*God Has a Dream
A Vision of Hope for Our Time*

You want to make a difference. You’ve opened your heart and mind to learning more. You’ve taken the time to do social analysis and prayerful reflection with

(Continued on page 2)

other people. You know you must act to make a difference but there seem to be so many needs. You can't do enough. You're not sure how to do this work. You don't have enough time. You start to feel guilty.

Too often we feel guilty. When you know that children are starving or that a mother and her children are living and sleeping in a car, it can be too much. It can be too sad for a person to bear. It's too painful. The problem seems too big for one person to make a difference.

Guilt rarely motivates action. In fact, guilt paralyzes us. We feel numb. We turn away from the suffering. We *turn away* from each other at the exact moment that we need to *turn toward* one another. Our well-being and the well-being of our sisters and brothers depend on our joining together, not in our walking away in isolation and despair.

We are called to connection, not guilt. Jesus said to his disciples: "Love one another even as I have loved you." Because love is more than a feeling, it is the most potent source of active power available to us. The work of real loving happens when we act to make our society one in which all people can participate in the decisions that affect their lives and are better supported by the systems we have created. The work of social change is difficult and time consuming. In order to overcome guilt we must move out of "I" thinking. These simple truths can help:

The truth is we're not expected to do this work alone. Personal conversion and the internal work that we must undergo to bring about a change of heart are imperative to the work. But this internal conversion by itself is not enough to change systems of injustice. If change is to happen, it will have to be at the collective level—at the level of

organizations, communities and societies.

Together we must increase our capacity for conceptualizing and understanding complex, inter-dependent issues. Learning how to think and talk together about the social, economic, and political forces and interrelationships is critical. It helps us to address root causes and to work for social change more effectively.

The truth is we're not expected to solve every problem. We must trust that the same Spirit that dwells within us and is inspiring us with compassion and energy to be catalysts for change dwells within others who will also be inspired to work for change. Connected through the Spirit, we will respond to the suffering in the world. We each must do what we can. This is all that God asks of us.

The truth is we're better together. Biologist Lynn Margulis has made the observation that independence is not a biological concept, it is a political concept. In nature, there is an instinct for wholeness, for connection and creativity. We're stronger, healthier, more creative and more effective when we work together. Becoming savvy about how to build relationships is a powerful step forward in the journey to justice.

The truth is that all it takes to move beyond guilt is a simple act of connection. Find out who else cares about what you care about and then find others who care enough to act. We at the Office for Social Justice are ready to help you make these connections. We are dedicated to nurturing the growth of our collective capacity to do the work of justice.

Together, we can make a difference.

Deb O'Brien

The world would be better off if people tried to become better. And people would become better if they stopped trying to become better off.

For when everybody tries to become better off, nobody is better off. But when everybody tries to become better, everybody is better off.

.....Peter Maurin, co-founded
The Catholic Worker Movement
with Dorothy Day in 1933.

AGAIN, MINNESOTANS AWAIT THE OUTCOME

As of this writing, members of the Minnesota Legislature have not yet completed work on most of the major spending bills that will constitute the state's budget for the next two years.

Legislative leadership and the Governor continue to fight over a global agreement that would set spending targets for the conference committees and allow them to go about the tough work of compromise. In these negotiations, the Governor continues to hold to his no new taxes pledge. He is willing, however, to support a cigarette user fee. His not calling this a tax is what others have referred to as linguistic gymnastics.

Even when legislators cross partisan lines to get the work of our state done, the Governor will not yield. He vetoed a transportation bill despite the fact that both Republicans and DFLers in the House and Senate voted for the bill and the tax increase.

Sowers Victories So Far Include:

- ▶ An increase in the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$6.15 an hour.
- ▶ \$12 million included in the bonding bill that is dedicated to ending long-term homelessness.

Still pending are issues crucial to economically vulnerable Minnesotans:

Health Care:

- ▶ The House wants to cut even more single adults off of MinnesotaCare than the Governor.
- ▶ The Senate avoids cuts and expands eligibility for single adults. The Senate also repeals some of the worst cuts passed in 2003, including a \$5000 cap on benefits for single adults, and co-payments for those participating in Medical Assistance and General Assistance Medical Care.

Child Care:

- ▶ The House wants to cut \$68.6 million by continuing a rate freeze for child care providers at the 2001 reimbursement rates.
- ▶ The Senate includes no cuts and expands eligibility for some families.

Housing:

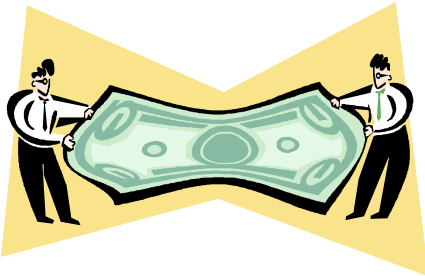
- ▶ Neither the House nor the Senate provided additional funding for emergency shelters or the Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Program.
- ▶ Both bodies provide a modest increase in funding for transitional housing.
- ▶ The House provided \$10 million to fund supportive services related to the Governor's long term homelessness plan by cutting other important housing programs. The Senate failed to provide those funds.
- ▶ The House proposes a deep cut in the Minnesota Renters' credit. The Senate included no such cut in their budget.

Minnesota Family Investment Program:

- ▶ Families living in public housing and participating in MFIP would face a \$200 "housing penalty" each month rather than a \$50 penalty under a house plan.
- ▶ The Senate eliminates the current \$50 "housing penalty" and a penalty that denies recipients of Supplemental Security Income \$125 in cash grants per month.
- ▶ The Senate scales back work requirements for those enrolled in post-secondary education or job training from 20 hours per week to 10 hours per week.

The Governor is keeping our elected officials from investing in the lives of economically vulnerable Minnesotans because of his "no-new-taxes" pledge. As a special session commences, we must convince him that people are more important than pledges. We need real solutions and real investments to make a difference.

Matt Gladue, Public Policy



PEOPLE AND PARISHES AT WORK

JustFaith: Follow-Up

Oscar Romero once said that he had been “changed” by the events of his country, but that he had always been faithful to what God wanted of him and had always loved the poor. What changed for him was the unique understanding of the need for God in our everyday lives.

As we visited with JustFaith groups in the last weeks of their 30 week reflection, the meaning of the words of Archbishop Romero were paraphrased over and over. A change takes place in already faith filled, loving people. (See page 7 for some of their comments.) God is placed front and center in their lives, along with those who suffer injustice. Many experience a significant shift in their world view.

The challenge is what to do with this change, how do we complement and deepen this change? In our visits we encouraged JustFaith participants to consider two things:

- ◆ What do they have to offer the Christian community from their JustFaith learning?
- ◆ In what ways can they assist their parish to grow in the kind of understanding they have developed?

If you have a JustFaith group in your parish, check with them as to how they are thinking about those questions. If you do not have a JustFaith group in your parish, check out this opportunity for change, growth and “new life in the Spirit of our just God”.

For more information see the JustFaith web site at www.justfaith.org or give us a call at 651-291-4477.

Strategies for Integrating the Social Mission: Parish Implementation Plans

Parish social justice groups often work hard at inviting parishioners to a greater understanding of justice and learning about the issues. They bring in speakers, encourage conversation and hand out materials. But there is also a sense of discouragement, because these activities do not seem to achieve their goals.

With that reality in mind, we have introduced a participatory strategic planning process. After formulating a vision for the parish, identifying the barriers to that vision, parish teams develop a plan that will move the parish toward the vision by overcoming the obstacles.

Nine parishes (**Transfiguration** in Oakdale, **Risen Savior** in Burnsville, **All Saints** in Lakeville, **Incarnation** in Minneapolis, **Most Holy Trinity** in St. Louis Park, **The Basilica of Saint Mary** in Minneapolis, **The Cathedral of Saint Paul**, **St. Ambrose** in Woodbury, and **Pax Christi** in Eden Prairie) gathered last year to identify their vision and the barriers that inhibit progress.

The development of implementation strategies was then conceived in the parish team. They responded to the question: **Looking ahead 3 years, what concrete actions can we take over the next year?**

Do you find yourself not making the kind of progress you hoped for in your parish? Perhaps strategic planning will make a difference. Check it out! Give us a call at 651-291-4477.

Sr. Kerry O'Reilly

“Once individuals
link together
they become
something different...”

Relationships change us,
reveal us, evoke more from us.

Only when we join with others
do our gifts become
visible, even to ourselves.”

Margaret Wheatley and
Myron Kellner-Rogers



PARISHES AT WORK (continued)



**Housing
Action Team**

Thirty parishioners from several parishes gathered in January with one fact and one question related to housing. All of them were committed to working on housing, but the question they struggled with was: could they commit to collective action on one part of the housing problem?

After study, reflection, and dialogue, the Housing Action Team chose "supportive housing" as its moral and strategic focus. Supportive housing connects affordable housing with services that help stabilize at-risk populations. It is key to ending long-term homelessness.

Please join us! The team has a plan to develop skills, expand capacity, and achieve measurable results. In the fall we will be touring Catholic Charities housing sites in order to learn more. The work will be prayerful, collaborative, and gratifying. Contact Matt Rezac (651-291-4536) for more information.



**Health Care
Listening Session**

On March 30, members of the Health Care Action Team held a Legislative Listening Session on Health Care at Christ Lutheran Church on Capitol Hill. Nearly 300 people attended the session. The evening began with stories from health care providers, who talked about the burden that additional Minnesota-Care cuts would put on the entire health care system, and powerful testimonials from two people

currently paying for Minnesota-Care coverage. At the end of the evening, Dan Gallagher, a parishioner at Holy Name of Jesus in Medina who chaired the meeting, asked legislators present to hold health care harmless this session, to raise taxes if necessary, and to move toward a system of universal health care. Representative Matt Entenza and Senator Linda Berglin, speaking on behalf of their caucuses, agreed to work with the team on the agenda. Representative Steve Sviggum, speaking on behalf of his caucus, did not agree. He stated that these cuts to health care access were necessary in order to balance the budget.

The Health Care Action team is made up of parishioners from **St. John the Baptist**, New Brighton; **Holy Name of Jesus**, Medina; **St. Edward**, Bloomington; **St. Mary of the Lake**, Plymouth; **St. Odilia**, Shoreview; **St. William**, Fridley; **The Cathedral of St. Paul**; **Risen Savior** in Burnsville; **Guardian Angels**, Oakdale, **St. Joan of Arc**, Minneapolis.

The group's next step will be to identify an issue to work on in coming legislative sessions. FFI: Call Matt Gladue at 651-291-4484.

**Worker Justice
Action Team**



The Worker Justice Action team is supporting workers at a large hotel in Bloomington who want to form a union. The team gathered letters supporting the organizing drive from eight different congregations and organizations. A small delegation delivered those letters to hotel management in late May. Call Matt Gladue at 651-291-4484 FFI.

"A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies.

True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth."

Martin Luther King, Jr.
*(Excerpt from Revolutionary Spirit
Address given at Riverside Church in
New York City on April 4, 1967.)*

FOCUS CONVERSATION TRAINING

The parishes of the Archdiocese are at work about many things related to justice. They are learning, developing, and strategizing. Several congregations have been involved in learning the skills of focus conversation.

Have you had meetings that end with no real conclusion? Have you had conversations at work that ended in frustration? Have you found that conversations with your pastor or staff have not gone as you intended?

If any of the above is true for you, you could be missing a necessary element for good conversation. We are encouraging more of our social justice staff and volunteers to adopt the focused conversation model that includes four essential steps aimed at creating a conversation that actually goes somewhere. The four important questions are: **What? Gut? So What? Now What?** For example:

- What?** **The stoplight turned yellow.**
- Gut?** **Oh, darn.**
- So What?** **Should I run it? Are there cars coming from the other way? Will I get caught?**
- Now What?** **Decision to stop at the yellow light.**

The yellow light decision illustrates the natural, human process we go through when making decisions. If we use this process we need to formulate questions that get at each of these four steps of the Focus Conversation Method.

- What:** **Questions about facts and external reality.**
- Gut:** **Questions to call forth immediate personal reaction to feelings about the data.**
- So What:** **Questions to draw out meaning.**
- Now What:** **Questions to elicit resolution.**

We have held a couple of workshops, inviting our network members to learn this method. People have told us, and we know from our own experience, "it works!" Following this method has achieved successful conversations in groups, one-on-one, within family and workplace.



*Piqued your interest?
We will offer workshops periodically so check the dates beginning next fall.*

Sr. Kerry O'Reilly

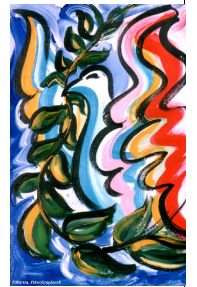
Focus Conversation Group in Training

(Pete Rose/Julie Madden in the foreground.)

NEWS FROM

Local Resources on Palestine/Israel Peace

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) is a coalition of 20 Washington-based church advocacy offices, formed to focus on U.S. Policy regarding the Middle East.



In addition to 17 Protestant and Orthodox agencies, CMEP's members include the Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of Men's Institutes, Franciscan Mission Service, and Maryknoll Missioners.

A CMEP organizing effort in Minnesota offers resources to churches, including a speakers' bureau for local-church forums and alerts for advocacy with Minnesota members of Congress and the federal Administration.

FMI Contact:

Charles Lutz
612-861-6648
<lutzch@mn.rr.com>

Resources and Events

Join with African Assistance Program (AAP) for

Anti-Racism Training

Presented by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond

Friday and Saturday, June 24—25

9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

*The People's Workshop Theme for the two trainings:
Undoing racism makes our community a better place for all.*

The People's Institute is a well recognized national anti-racism training organization based in New Orleans, Louisiana, with offices also in Minneapolis and Duluth.

This is the first anti-racism workshop organized by AAP as part of our community organizing initiative designed to help us meet our immediate goal which is to help African families overcome cultural and systemic barriers including racism, in order to attain economic security and personal self-efficacy. AAP is a 21st Century non-profit organization serving African immigrant and refugee families resettled in Minnesota. AAP promotes diversity, works for systemic changes to reduce or eliminate racism, and stirs civic participation to generate the hope, courage, confidence and understanding that Africans need to fulfill their economic potential as new Americans.

A fee of \$250.00 is encouraged to help us cover some workshop expenses (scholarships may be available). **Participants are strongly urged to be present for the entire workshop.** If you or your agency is interested, please contact Andrew Suah for more information on registration at (voice) 763-560-9643, (fax) 763-650-9720 or (e-mail) asuah@africanassistanceprogram.org

Now Available:

CHARITY AND JUSTICE: WALKING THE SOCIAL MISSION

In response to requests from several parishes, OSJ has designed a two part reflection process to be used by those in the parish engaged in direct service.

The purpose of this process is to affirm those doing direct service, discuss the relationship of charity to justice and recommend steps that the parish might take to connect these two activities.

Those delivering direct service have an important role to play in educating the parish on the very real needs of the people they serve.

This new resource is available on our webpage at www.osjspm.org

JustFaith 2005 Fall Session

This thirty week, education and reflection program provides experiences leading to a greater understanding of domestic and global poverty. We will begin again this fall with a number of new Archdiocesan parish groups.

We held an informational meeting May 24 at St. Odilia and here are some of the reactions of former JustFaith participants:

"I didn't know that I didn't know about the social message of justice!"

"Our group developed so much trust we were able to talk freely about our questions."

"There's lots of reading to do, but I was so interested that I found time even with my busy schedule with work and family."

"At first I marked off the weeks on a calendar because it seemed so long, but soon I was eager for each week's meeting to come."

"I was changed, profoundly."

"It was a wonderful experience, and challenging."

"It changed my mind about a lot of things."

JustFaith is a thirty-week adult formation program, offering an opportunity for those in parishes to experience this spiritual journey into compassion. It is an extensive, conversion-based process that seeks to provide successful strategies for energizing parishioners to address human suffering and to become advocates for justice.

This program serves to strengthen the growing commitment of parishes and churches to be tools of social transformation, mercy and compassion.

FMI: Contact Kathy Mantaj, Office for Social Justice
651-291-4483 or email her at mantajk@archspm.org

ERROR: undefined
OFFENDING COMMAND: pp_clip

STACK: