

VOICES

WINTER/SPRING 2015

Just Imagine! The Transformation of a Parish by JustFaith Ministries Programs

by Mandy Olivam, Program Associate, JustFaith Ministries

Can you imagine a parish formed, informed, and transformed by JustFaith Ministries?

- Imagine the pastor and pastoral council encouraging all parishioners to step outside of their comfort zones to meet Christ in distressing disguise in their communities.
- Imagine parishioners of all ages—children, families, retirees—staying after Mass every Sunday to assemble and deliver meals to hungry people.
- Imagine parish efforts and resources invested in outreach ministries to a local jail.
- Imagine parishioners nurturing a community center that provides food, clothing, and education in poor neighborhoods.
- Imagine parish meetings grounded in genuine prayer and true dialogue.
- Imagine a parish committee that provides holiday meals for families in need.
- Imagine parishioners spearheading a community organizing group that works to unite the city around issues that its diverse membership identifies.
- Imagine churchgoers fostering a fruitful relationship with a sister parish in Mexico.
- Imagine parishioners recognizing the voice of God in the stories of their marginalized friends.
- Imagine, year after year, small groups of faithful people gathering together to listen and respond to Christ's invitation to radical discipleship.

At Holy Cross Parish in Springfield, Massachusetts, these images are reality.

Almost 11 years ago, the landscape of parish activity looked drastically different, according to parishioner Bill Toller, a current member of JustFaith Ministries' Board of Directors. "Before our connection to JustFaith Ministries, we were a busy parish with a school and the normal ministries located on church property exclusively." However, since offering JustFaith Ministries' programs year after year, the parish's circle of care has widened. Bill says

that the parish now sustains "a consistent focus on ministry outside of parish boundaries."

Holy Cross is an upper middle class parish in the most affluent neighborhood in Springfield, a city with a very high urban poverty rate. When JustFaith Ministries' president Jack Jezreel spoke to a small group in the parish in June 2004, Bill and ten companions felt inspired to participate in a JustFaith group. "I knew this was a program that needed to be offered in our parish," says Bill. Now, after more than a decade of connection to JustFaith



JustFaith Ministries Board Member, Bill Toller, and friends, participating in the Sandwiches for the Homeless Ministry at Holy Cross Parish.

Ministries, "I cannot imagine *not* introducing others to this formation experience every year."

Jane Virgilio was one of the initial participants in the JustFaith program at Holy Cross. She says she was living "a sheltered adulthood."

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JustFaith was a providential invitation to respond to her inner call to engage: “Stepping into that community was my first step into the world. God was saying, ‘Okay, you need to expand your horizons. What you’re focusing on is not nourishing. We’re going to get you set up so that we can displace you, so you can use your gifts and be nourished by something that is way different.’”

Jane has served as a facilitator of a JustFaith group every year since. Her involvement in Holy Cross’ social ministry work and her local community’s justice efforts have continually evolved; she has served in prominent leadership roles, positions she could never have envisioned filling prior to her JustFaith experience. “I’m not an outgoing, public figure. I’m just a parishioner who decided I was going to do what I could do to further the common good...I’m not the best one for the role, but I’m the one who fills it, because I want to make things better. The reality is that oftentimes, when we’re called, it is very uncomfortable.”

One of Holy Cross’ thriving programs is its Sandwiches for the Homeless Ministry. Distributing lunches, Jane shares, has been an opportunity to foster mutual recognition between parishioners and people on the margins of Springfield. “Trust has been built. They can depend on us. We remain faithful.” It is also a chance to receive challenging messages. Jane tells the story of a day when parishioners were complaining about being uncomfortable in bad weather: “I remember the lady we were providing things to said, ‘Hey! We’re out in this stuff all the time!’” With a laugh, Jane continues, “When we got in the car, I said, ‘You know, that was God talking to us!’”

Bob Tyer was a member of a JustFaith group the second year at Holy Cross. He heard Jane share her JustFaith story of transformation: “I ran after her down the aisle! Her testimony was an invitation.” Bob has facilitated JustFaith groups for the past ten years. “I continue to learn more year after year. The youngest member of our first group”—who has since become an editor of a national Catholic publication—“said, ‘Once you experience this formation program, you can’t go back. You have to do what Jesus asked us to do.’”

After his initial experience of JustFaith, Bob began volunteering in the parish sandwich ministry and doing work at Gray House, a neighborhood service agency founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph. On one occasion at

Gray House, a grade school classmate of Bob’s came in seeking assistance. “As a kid,” Bob says, “I was afraid of him...and he was still challenging!” A common connection to the JustFaith program fostered a new relationship between them. Bob says he is brought to tears by his friend’s story; he identifies their unlikely connection as “an example of real transformation.”

Over the years, Bob has seen many people —“teachers, doctors, lawyers, nurses, all looking for something else”—fulfilled by their

Once you experience this formation program, you can’t go back. You have to do what Jesus asked us to do.

participation in JustFaith Ministries’ programs. Their varying perspectives enrich the process and offer insights into the multifaceted needs of their local community and beyond. With such diverse groups, “each week is a lesson, a learning.” Participants’ enthusiasm overflows into parish efforts—generally, there is no need to recruit volunteers ahead of time because ample numbers of parishioners simply show up. “People just know it’s part of their regular, routine parish life.”

Even initially skeptical voices within the parish have found conversion through JustFaith Ministries’ programs. Buzz DeRusha was a member of Holy Cross’ men’s Cursillo group with Bill Toller. After a meeting during which the group viewed a film on undocumented workers, Buzz remembers, “my response was something like, ‘Go back to where you came from.’ I had no sympathy for their cause.” During the dialogue that followed, Buzz recalls Bill saying to him, “‘Buzz, it is in the Gospel.’ It was then I realized that, if I were to continue on with my journey to find faith, I needed to explore my prejudiced feelings.”

Although he was hesitant at first, Buzz agreed to participate in Crossing Borders, JustFaith Ministries’ module on immigration. As the program progressed, he found himself touched by his companions: “I began to realize that I might just be able to get along with my fellow participants. I might even get to like them!” Buzz was converted by the small community: “I came to realize that, on a weekly basis, I was surrounded by people that represent a wide

range of social, economical, and educational backgrounds. People of color and Spanish-speaking people sat next to me. We had young people and senior citizens alike. We all read the same books, watched the same DVDs, and carpooled on our Border Crossing immersion trips. We had discussions and shared feelings that came from the heart as well as the gut. We learned how to listen to each other and to respect different opinions. We became friends.”

The relationships he formed over the course of the program caused Buzz to take a closer look at his faith life. “I was ashamed of who I was, but I liked who I was becoming. I realized that we are children of God regardless of skin color, what language we speak, or what neighborhood we live in. I realized that I could never go back to the old me.” Upon completing the module, Buzz continued his journey by volunteering at local agencies; he currently tutors students in ESL classes.

Over the past 11 years, hundreds of Holy Cross parishioners have participated in JustFaith Ministries’ programs and have walked countless paths of conversion. These people, says Bill, “continue to transform their homes, parishes, and communities” and tell “stories of true gospel transformation” with their lives. Jane attributes the parish’s dynamism to “the power of the connections among all of us as participants” in JustFaith Ministries’ programs; she notes that these processes have offered parishioners the possibility of “opting-in to being faithful.” Says Bill, “The gift of community, which forms during each cycle of JustFaith Ministries’ programs, continues to be both humbling and inspiring.”

Holy Cross continues its rich relationship with JustFaith Ministries. Jane’s participation has nurtured a posture of receptivity to the possibilities, allowing her and others “to enter the mystery, God’s mystery. Not knowing is okay. That powerful nature is beyond what we are apt to be aware of.

“What do we want to have as our identity? Our identity includes the struggles of our brothers and sisters...and because of that, I have hope.”

“For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.” (Matthew 18:20)

And in their midst is hope and community and transformation. Imagine that!



The Difference You Make with CRS

by **Kim Mazyck**,

Relationship Manager, National Partnerships, Catholic Relief Services

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CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

As an employee of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), I am often asked how the work we do makes a difference. The question never stumps me, but I do pause because I attempt to choose the best story I know to answer the question. In many dioceses across the country, the CRS Collection occurs on the fourth Sunday of Lent; in fact, it may have occurred recently in your parish. The CRS Collection offers Catholics a convenient opportunity to demonstrate their solidarity with more than 100 million people through a charitable contribution during Mass. I am sure you wonder how the money makes a difference in lives around the world. Many of us are familiar with the expression “a picture is worth a thousand words,” so I selected two pictures which on their own speak many words. I also want to provide some context, so you understand what these pictures may have looked like without you.

I was fortunate to travel with a delegation of ten ministry leaders to visit the village of Minta in the northwestern African country of Mali. There we learned about a water project that transformed life within this village. We sat with village leaders and heard stories about life in the village before the water project. We learned about the long journeys to fetch water, the illnesses experienced by the children, and the malnourishment that occurred. The leaders then shared with us the changes that occurred after a water tower and more than 100 latrines were built. We learned that with accessible water, the women and men could now focus on the village school. The hand-washing station pictured here is directly in front of the entrance to the school. The runoff from the station waters a vegetable garden that produces food for the school; this means that every student receives healthy meals during the day. The children of Minta are now healthier as a result of hand-washing, meals at school, and the lack of human waste in their village. Take a closer look at the young girl looking directly at the camera. Not only do you see her beauty, but you see what we all see in the eyes of healthy children: interest, delight, and energy.

This is a Haitian refugee family that was displaced and is now settled in the Dominican Republic, where this picture was taken. Just



Children gather at the hand-washing station in the village of Minta.



Haitian refugee family now living in the Dominican Republic.

look at the faces: you cannot escape the display of immense joy and genuine comfort. We often hear stories of families that are displaced

because of natural disasters or conflict. We see accompanying pictures that show us the challenges and the despair of those situations.

I often look at this picture and I am reminded that CRS works to make sure that refugees and displaced families receive what they need in their new locations. We may not know what this family experienced in their journey from Haiti to the Dominican Republic or the circumstances when they first arrived, but the smile on the mother's face demonstrates a true sense of happiness.

When I do not have pictures at the ready for those who ask me about the work of CRS, I still share these two stories to illustrate CRS's commitment to enabling families to live together, with access to food and water, and also to fostering a sense of peace in their hearts. "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." (Matthew 25:35-36)

I offer my gratitude to all of you who donate to CRS through various venues, especially through the CRS Collection or CRS Rice Bowl during the Lenten season. I also commend and encourage you to share the stories of how, on behalf of all U.S. Catholics, CRS serves people around the world. I encourage you to visit www.crsricebowl.org and click on the tab "Stories of Hope" for more stories from the countries of Tanzania, Nicaragua, Niger, Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of Congo; you will also find a story

I offer my gratitude to all of you who donate to CRS through various venues, especially through the CRS Collection or CRS Rice Bowl during the Lenten season.

from the Diocese of Albany. Thank you for your acts of solidarity, your faith, and your willingness to walk with our sisters and brothers.

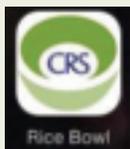
The CRS Collection is one of the twelve national collections established by the bishops of the United States so that, by combining resources, we can more effectively carry out the global mission of the Church. The CRS collection supports six Catholic organizations (Catholic Relief Services; the USCCB's

Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development; the USCCB's Migration and Refugee Services; Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.; the USCCB's Secretariat for Cultural Diversity in the Church; and the Holy Father's Relief Fund) and their work to advance the international social ministry of the Church.

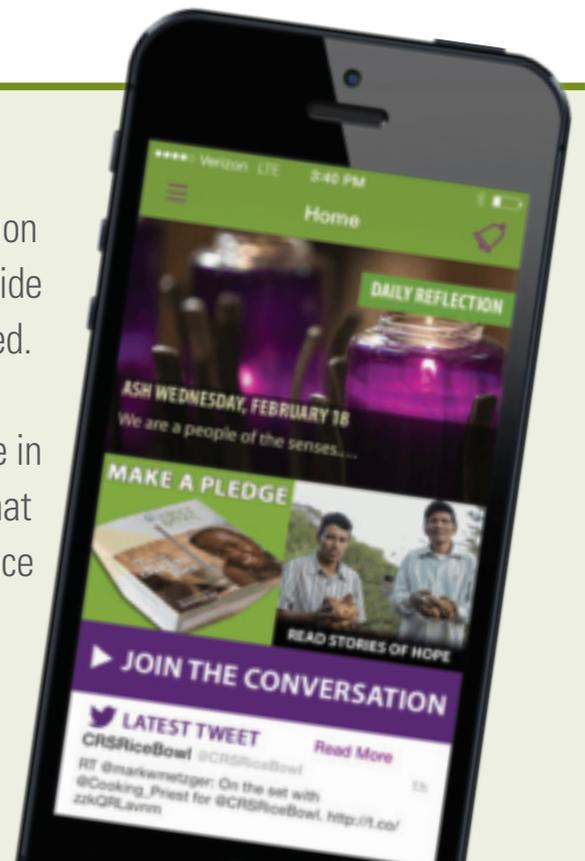
To learn more, please visit usccb.org/crscollection 

Need a Portable Resource for Lent?

Sometimes in our hectic schedules it is hard to find time for reflection and prayer. It is equally hard to find an easy-to-carry resource to guide our reflection. The CRS Rice Bowl app may be the resource you need. Each day the CRS Rice Bowl app provides a prayer literally at your fingertips: a short reflection that you can read before your commute in the morning or evening. You will also find meatless meal recipes that you can cook at home with your family. Share your Lenten experience with family and hear stories of people who benefit from the CRS



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Bread Rising: A Campaign to End Hunger by 2030

by Rev. Nancy Neal,

Deputy Director for the church relations department at Bread for the World

www.bread.org



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In 2015, the world reaches a milestone: this is the year the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) expire. Fifteen years ago during the Millennium Summit, the largest gathering of world leaders in history adopted the U.N. Millennium Declaration, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty by creating a series of goals. The goals address poverty from many dimensions—income, hunger, disease, shelter, and exclusion—and promote gender equality, education, and environmental stability.

In 1990, 43 percent of people in the developing world lived on less than \$1.25 per day. We have cut that number by more than half in just 25 years. This is certainly something to celebrate! But our work is not done. There are still 1.2 billion people living on less than \$1.25 per day. That's more than one in seven people in the world. And 870 million of those people don't have enough to eat, including 100 million children.

The good news, however, is that we are making progress. By making a plan, setting goals, and bringing together world leaders, we have advanced significantly in achieving the MDGs. According to the World Bank and the U.N. High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, this success has paved the way for ending hunger and extreme poverty by 2030. The same organizations have put together recommendations for the next set of goals—the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Bread for the World has launched a campaign—Bread Rising—to bring the faith community in the United States on board with the ambitious goal of ending hunger in our time. We believe that ending hunger is possible by 2030, but only if the U.S. government—the president and Congress—make ending hunger a priority. Our campaign lays out a policy-change agenda and an election strategy whose aim is for the federal government to make ending hunger a national priority by 2017.

We have had some success so far. Last year was full of incredible victories. On the farm bill, no participants were cut from the SNAP (formerly food stamps) program, and 600,000 more people annually were given access to U.S. food aid. We halted the passage of a dangerous

amendment to a Coast Guard bill that would have reduced the reach of food aid for 2 million people. On immigration, Congress passed a government spending bill that provides funding for poverty-reduction programs in Central America that will address the hunger, poverty, and violence that drove the spikes in child migrants this past year. And the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched a multi-sector nutrition strategy, which assures that our government is able to better measure improvements in nutrition through U.S. poverty-focused development programs.

None of this could have happened without the important advocacy of church members around the country. People called, wrote letters, sent emails, and visited their members of Congress on all of these issues.

Yet work is just beginning this year. The U.N. General Assembly will address the Sustainable Development Goals in September. These are universal goals, meaning that they also apply to developed nations like the United States. They include goals for ending hunger, improving nutrition, and empowering women.

In the next election, it will be crucial that we elect a president and members of Congress—whether Republican, Democrat, or Independent—who will make ending hunger in the United States a top-five priority and ending hunger around the world a top-20 priority. We need our leaders to embrace the goal of ending hunger by 2030.

One of the most critical pieces of legislation before Congress this year is the reauthorization of the child nutrition bill. This bill funds WIC (Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children), subsidized school feeding programs, and the summer feeding program. We all know that good, nutritious food is critical for success in school and in the workforce. Well-fed children are healthier, have fewer behavioral problems, and learn more easily. These programs are critical for supporting the one-in-five American children who are at risk of hunger. The free and reduced-price school lunch program feeds 21.5 million low-income children. The school breakfast program feeds 11.2 million, and the summer food program feeds 2.4 million. WIC



Students at Wolcott Elementary in West Hartford, CT. USDA photo by Vivian Felten.

supports 8.3 million low-income pregnant women, infants, and children up to age 5. Unfortunately, though, for every seven low-income children who get free and reduced lunch, only four also receive breakfast, and only one also receives summer meals.

We need your partnership more than ever before. Our Offering of Letters campaign for 2015 features child nutrition reauthorization. We are calling for continued funding and expanded access to these programs. Your letters make a difference: they will influence how this bill is introduced and how it is written. We hope you will join the campaign this year.

We believe we are called by God to end hunger in our time. We experience God's grace in Jesus Christ, and one of the ways we respond is by working to be sure people are able to feed themselves. We read in Scripture God's call to feed people who are hungry. Farmers were instructed to leave behind the remnants of their harvest so that those without food could glean the fields. Jesus fed 5,000 people with just two loaves and five fish. And, of course, Jesus fed his disciples at the table in his Last Supper. There are many ways in which God provides for people who are hungry. We take that lead and believe that we can, through advocacy, have an impact on the lives of millions in the United States and around the world who don't always know where their next meal is coming from. We hope that you will join us this year in working to end hunger in our time.

To read more about the 2014 Bread for the World victories, visit blog.bread.org/victories

To learn more about the 2015 Offering of Letters, visit bread.org/ol

Signs of Hope in a World Torn by Violence

by Judy Coode,

Communications Director, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

www.maryknollaffiliates.org
www.maryknollaymissioners.org
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www.maryknollsociety.org



This year marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of Pax Christi International (PXI), the Catholic peace movement created at the end of World War II, of which Maryknoll is a member organization. PXI's mission has always been

to encourage reconciliation, based on the belief that peace is possible and that we can bring an end to cycles of violence. As Catholics, we believe that through our baptism we are called to strive for peace.

It may feel as if war, militarism, and conflict are being pushed in every corner of the planet, but what we often overlook are the ways that peace and reconciliation are being promoted. Maryknoll missionaries around the world see many peacemaking efforts up close. Here are just a few examples:

- **In December 2013**, South Sudan's government collapsed and Africa's newest nation descended into civil war; several Maryknoll missionaries experienced this trauma alongside their South Sudanese neighbors. One might wonder whether it is possible to promote peace and reconciliation in such a volatile context: some South Sudanese are resolved to reverse the current political and humanitarian crises. Over the next two years the Committee for National Healing, Peace, and Reconciliation (CNHPR) will facilitate a nationwide grassroots-level consultation process to ensure that South Sudan shapes its future around the rich experiences, knowledge,

May there never again be wars, but always the desire and commitment to peace and fraternity among peoples.

—Pope Francis, 1 January 2015

and needs of its own citizens. In October 2014 CNHPR hosted a four-week training program entitled "A Step Together: Shared Journeys of Listening and Dialogue," which gathered more than 80 community leaders and faith-based practitioners.

South Africa's Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), with support from several international agencies including Catholic Relief Services, facilitated the workshops. At the program's graduation ceremony, Rev. Bernard Oliya Suwa, Secretary General of CNHPR, noted that participants shared a common experience: the dehumanizing effects of war. In his remarks he stressed that the ultimate goal of reconciliation is the daunting task of restoring the "humanness" of all people throughout the country.

- **In 2007, South Korea** announced plans to build a naval base on Jeju Island. The island is the site of a 450-year-old village that supports 1,500 farmers and fishermen and is also a designated UN World Heritage site. In October 2014 people from China, Japan, and Korea organized a Jeju Peace Festival to discuss various peace initiatives and how to shape a common future for East Asia. Participants shared experiences and reflected on similarities in the movement against the bases in Okinawa and Jeju and in the growing concerns on environmental issues in China and Japan. Ongoing efforts include the Catholic Bishops Conference of Korea

openly supporting demonstrations protesting the base's construction; a number of priests and religious women have been arrested in civil disobedience actions. As the movement to stop the Jeju Island naval base enters its ninth year, the Ecumenical Working Group on Korea (along with other allied organizations) is planning to send a multi-faith peace delegation to North and South Korea in 2015.

Learn more at www.SaveJejuNow.org

- **In Brazil**, Maryknoll lay missionary Joanne Blaney works in Sao Paulo with the Human Rights and Popular Education Center, which trains educators and community and church leaders in violence prevention and restorative justice practices so they may address interpersonal and group conflicts. Working in prisons, Joanne promotes the restorative justice approach, an alternative to the punitive judicial system. Restorative justice practices are based on the values of mutual respect, inclusivity, forgiveness, a "just justice" for all involved, individual and collective responsibility, and social reintegration—all key gospel values.

- **In Kenya in September 2007**, an intense time when violence was breaking out among tribal groups, Maryknoll Sisters Sia Temu, Giang Nguyen, and Teresa Hougnon began their "Conversations for Social Change" program. The sisters invited people from diverse backgrounds—ethnic, economic, religious, gender, and age—to come together in small groups to participate in a six-month process. By having a safe place to share their feelings, be listened to, and practice listening without confrontation and judgment, people



Representatives from all 10 states of South Sudan and the Abyei Area at "A Step Together: Shared Journeys of Listening and Dialogue in South Sudan."



started to heal. The sisters have expanded their ministry to include workshops on conflict management, intercultural living skills, and trauma awareness for religious communities.

Learn more at www.maryknollsisters.org/articles/finding-peace-through-conversation

- **In Palestine**, the Arab Education Institute (AEI), a PXI partner organization, offers the Sumud Program. In the Palestinian context, “sumud” stands for a third way of nonviolence—neither succumbing to the occupation nor getting overwhelmed by hate in confronting the occupier. This practice takes form as people uphold the dignity of daily life, connect to the land, and preserve hope for change. One aspect of the Sumud Program is promoting interreligious dialogue, not only between Christian and Muslim Palestinians but also between Palestinians and Israeli Jews. AEI provides educational resources that show how the common values of the three monotheistic religions are relevant to the students’ lives and foster connections with the land and its communities. AEI also organizes field trips to help students learn more about the region in which they live and the people who reside there.

Learn more at www.aeicenter.org/

- **In late January**, 150 people, including staff from the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, attended the first Interfaith Conference on Drone Warfare. Presenters spoke about a range of topics that included the moral considerations of using the remote-controlled weapons; legal issues such as the U.S.’s violations of international law in its use of drones; relevance of this issue to faith groups; and the actions religious leaders and individuals can take to stop the use of drone warfare. Participants drafted a public statement calling on the Obama administration to halt immediately the use of targeted lethal drone strikes, and instead invest in nonviolent alternatives to addressing the problem of terrorism worldwide.

Read the statement on the MOGC website, www.maryknollogc.org

Join your efforts with those of our Maryknoll family through organized programs and by reaching out to others to shape relationships that build peace. *JF*

Upcoming events focused on peace and reconciliation:

The 13th annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days will be held April 17-20 near Washington, D.C.

Its focus this year will be on mass incarceration and systems of exploitation. Workshops will include “Peace-building and Cycles of Violence,” “Ferguson or Fallujah? Demilitarizing Law Enforcement and Disarming U.S. Foreign Policy,” “Guantanamo to Rikers Island: Treatment of Prisoners,” and “Restorative Justice and Community Healing: Experience in Africa and Latin America,” which will include Maryknoll lay missionary, Joanne Blaney.

From April 27-May 22, in this 70th year since the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, the Review Conference on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will take place at the UN Headquarters in New York.

The NPT’s objectives are to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology; to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; and to further the goals of achieving nuclear disarmament, as well as general and complete disarmament. International coordinating and advisory committees have been created to build popular pressure to impact the conference. The international network makes these demands: that the conference require negotiations to begin on banning and completely eliminating the world’s nuclear arsenal as provided by Article VI of the NPT; that substantive international actions be taken to reverse climate change; and that military budgets be significantly reduced to prevent war and to provide more funding to meet human needs. Actions prior to the NPT Review Conference include an international peace conference from April 24 to 25; a people’s march to the UN on April 26; the presentation of millions of petition signatures demanding nuclear weapons abolition; student and youth events; and creative and bold nonviolent actions. **Learn more at www.peaceandplanet.org**

Pax Christi International will celebrate its 70th anniversary with a world assembly, titled “Pilgrims on the Path to Peace,” in Bethlehem from May 13 to 17.

All are welcome to attend. The program will include events ranging from dialogue sessions to round tables where PXI members and local peacemakers can reflect and strategize on Pax Christi themes and issues. There will also be a day-long anniversary festival, which will include a marketplace, entertainment, and the Pax Christi Peace Award ceremony. Learn more at www.paxchristi.net. In addition to the assembly, the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation is organizing a pilgrimage that will bookend the Pax Christi event, May 10-23. **Learn more at hcef.org/programs/lsp/pax-christi-international-pci**

An Invitation to the Journey of a Lifetime

Maryknoll Lay Missioners (MKLM) invites JustFaith Ministries’ program graduates to experience a spiritual journey into compassion and an immersion into the lives, culture, faith, and history of the people MLKM serves.

This is an extraordinary invitation to witness mission ministries that respond to basic needs and help to create a more just and compassionate world. Each trip is centered on encounters with “the other” and with God as expressed through sacred stories, traditions, history, and culture.

Learn more at:

www.friendsacrossborders.org/trips/justfaith-ministries-immersion/

Why not sign up today for the journey of a lifetime?!

Current Immersion Programs:

TANZANIA
August 8-20, 2015

Deadline for signing up is April 8, 2015.

Tanzania is one of the oldest known human-inhabited areas on Earth and is most known for the Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, Kilimanjaro, and Zanzibar; for great beauty, picturesque scenery, and abundance of wildlife.

Eradicating Poverty with the Catholic Campaign for Human Development

by Genevieve Mougey,

Poverty Outreach and Education Manager, for the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

www.usccb.org/cchd



CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

I was visiting my parents over the Christmas season and inevitably Pope Francis became the topic of conversation. We spoke at length about the attraction of our Holy Father to both Catholics and non-Catholics. My dad noted that Pope Francis' frank manner of speaking allows for many people to feel "at ease" with him, thus making the gospel message more manageable. During his Message for World Food Day, Pope Francis stated, "To support and protect the family so that it educates in solidarity and respect is a decisive step in moving towards a more equitable and humane society" (16 October 2013). Words like solidarity, respect, equitable and humane society resonate with my family and are meaningful to families everywhere because while our country continues to climb out of the financial crisis, many low-income and working families struggle daily. One in seven households in the United States face food insecurity and 32 percent of all people living in poverty are children.

By supporting families and communities and by encouraging participation, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) continues to embrace the social tradition of the Catholic Church. Six years ago, more than 120 people at Our Lady of Assumption parish in California had homes in foreclosure. Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action (COPA), a local organization and CCHD grant recipient, saw an opportunity to help. They assisted the families of the parish by doing research around the foreclosure issue in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties and conducting house meetings about the issue. Community members learned how to run foreclosure workshops and met with city, county, and state officials about the problem. They also worked with some of the bigger banks to set up face-to-face meetings between loan officers and homeowners who were requesting loan modification or principal reduction. The hard work paid off when 74 families were able to keep their homes.



The Catholic Campaign for Human Development is an outpouring of the U.S. Catholic bishops' commitment to address and eradicate poverty in our nation. Poverty affects every single diocese, every parish, and every community. By addressing the root causes of poverty—like systemic racism, lack of education, inadequate housing, and disregard for the family—CCHD is making a difference in the lives of families all across the United States. By affecting the root causes of poverty and empowering those who live in low-income communities, we continue to live into the vision and mission that the bishops set forth 46 years ago. *JF*

One in seven households in the United States face food insecurity and 32 percent of all people living in poverty are children.

CCHD and Environmental Justice: Sustainable Development

by **Samantha Opachan**, Intern with the USCCB Catholic Campaign for Human Development and the Environmental Justice Program

www.usccb.org/cchd

Pope Francis addressed the participants in the world meeting of popular movements, stating, “Love for the poor is at the center of the Gospel. Land, housing, and work, what you struggle for, are sacred rights. To make this claim is nothing unusual; it is the social teaching of the Church.” One increasingly common way these “sacred rights” are disregarded is through unsustainable development practices that neglect both the environment and communities experiencing poverty.

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) supports communities throughout the United States in their efforts to address issues of sustainable development. Sustainable development places a special emphasis on responsible stewardship of the environment, the needs of those living in poverty, and the development of individuals and communities. It meets the needs of the present without putting future generations at risk.

The common good, the preservation of creation, our rights and responsibilities, and the dignity of all people are interwoven.

“Love for the poor is at the center of the Gospel. Land, housing, and work, what you struggle for, are sacred rights. To make this claim is nothing unusual; it is the social teaching of the Church.” —Pope Francis

Working towards sustainable development that respects the dignity of all people is an integral part of this tapestry. Our stewardship of creation and our economic practices should not exploit precious resources or vulnerable communities.

CCHD empowers low-income groups to promote sustainable development in their communities through advocacy and economic initiatives. Since 2013, CCHD has invested nearly \$2.5 million dollars and partnered with over 35 low-income community-based organizations and 31 dioceses in 22 states to support environmental justice.

One issue that CCHD-funded groups are currently wrestling with is fracking. By rapidly converting rural and natural areas into industrial zones, the practice of fracking

can negatively impact the environment and lead to adverse effects on public health and local economies. In New York, Moving in Congregations Acting in Hope (MICAHO), an ecumenical group receiving a CCHD grant, recognized the negative effects of fracking on their community’s farmland, livestock, public health, water, and air. MICAHO supported poor and working families to mobilize resources, build relationships, and take action. Their successful efforts helped protect their community from potential drill sites.

CCHD-funded groups are also helping to create economic opportunities to protect the environment for low-income communities. Appalachia is a region devastated by high unemployment. As manufacturers left southern communities in the late 1990’s, many people found themselves looking for jobs where there were few opportunities for new employment. Opportunity Threads, a worker-owned cut-and-sew cooperative in western North Carolina, recognized that the textile industry needed to be innovative, and predicated their business model on community centeredness and sustainability. Opportunity Threads works for positive environmental, economic, and social impacts for both clients and workers. They exemplify an environmentally and economically sustainable model by focusing on production that uses organic cotton and reusable materials, as well as by advancing the skills of workers and promoting fair labor. Opportunity Threads has grown into a strong business that will lead to lasting social, economic, and environmental change in an Appalachian community that has traditionally struggled.

Our faith calls us to be good stewards of the environment and to care for each other. Sustainable practices support the protection of both the environment and communities that are most vulnerable.

FF

The infographic features a green map of the United States with red dots indicating CCHD investment locations. The text reads: "THE CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT CARES FOR GOD'S CREATION". Below the map, it states: "SINCE 2013, CCHD HAS INVESTED NEARLY \$2.5 MILLION IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE". At the bottom, it lists social media handles: "Get involved! PovertyUSA.org | PobrezaUSA.org @EndPovertyUSA PovertyUSA".

By supporting grassroots organizations around the country, CCHD is empowering local communities to address a range of environmental justice issues:

- Water Pollution
- Air Pollution
- Sustainable Agriculture
- Energy Efficiency
- Green Jobs
- Extractives
- Urban Gardening
- Community Development

22 States | 31 Dioceses | 17 Community Organizing Programs | 35 Economic Development Programs

Switching the Sign

Excerpted from *Still In the Storm*, a new publication by JustFaith Ministries.

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.

—Revelation 3:20

What do you do when the world knocks you off your feet?

How do you respond when gunshots blast precious lives away?

(For surely we must respond!) And, when drought sets in,

or famine, flood and fire come to visit, what do you do?

When so many are seeking refuge from the violations of war, and the changing of the weather, from the worries of debt or illness, and the despair of grinding poverty,

and from that sinking, powerless feeling in the face of it all.

Where do you turn? How are we to respond?

It is here, suspended in the crux of this penetrating question that prayerful presence makes all the difference.

The needs of the world are too great, the suffering and pain too extensive, the lures of the world too seductive for us to begin to change the world unless we are changed...

—William Willimon

First, resist the instinct to flee—that urge to change the channel and fritter away attentiveness on frivolous preoccupations.

Instead, pause, breathe, and hold open your life to the frightening fullness of the moment.

Visualize through the glass of a storefront door, a hand reaching for a sign, flipping it from CLOSED to OPEN.

Listen for that persistent voice, the breath behind every cry, that invites you to turn and be changed.

It starts as a fundamental re-orientation—turning our lives, our attention, inside out, with a deliberate desire to switch the sign to OPEN.

Give A Gift That Lasts

JustFaith Ministries responds to the vision of Jesus to “proclaim good news to the poor.” Our work invites and inspires people of faith to walk in the ways of Jesus as healers of this world and bearers of hope to those who struggle and suffer.

Thank you for your support of this important work.

You help sustain this ministry because you believe in what we can do together and because you want to make a difference in the lives of others. We’re excited to tell you about yet another way you can make an impact.

As JustFaith Ministries plans ahead for the future, **we invite you to consider a legacy gift.**

Your gift will translate into thousands of people engaged in healing the wounds of the world.

You are familiar with simple donations, which you make today to be used immediately. In addition, there are different types of **planned gifts** that offer a donor unique advantages. Some planned gifts include giving through your will or living trust, or through a beneficiary designation for insurance, stock, or other securities. These gifts can be for ANY amount, and they allow you to contribute in a meaningful way.

The key feature of planned gifts is that they provide important benefits to you as well as to the ongoing mission of JustFaith Ministries.

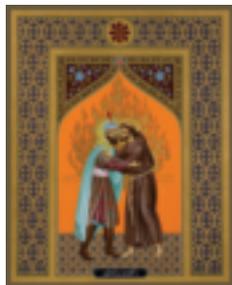
By including JustFaith Ministries in your estate plan, you can help **spread the good news and make a lasting impact.**

Contact Stephanie Kaufman at 502-429-0865, Ext. 228 or stephanie.kaufman@justfaith.org to learn more about ways you can give a gift that lasts.

JustMatters

JustMatters is a series of small group processes from JustFaith Ministries that allow participants to focus on a particular current social justice topic. JustMatters modules use prayer, readings, media, guest speakers, and dialogue to give sustained attention to a specific area of social concern or social ministry and culminate in a call to engagement. We invite you to delve deeper into the critical issues we face by participating in a JustMatters module.

The following modules will be updated in 2015. Please **visit justfaith.org** for more information.



In the Spirit of St Francis and the Sultan brings Muslims and Christians together to stand as a sign of Muslim-Christian good will and cooperation by helping participants learn the basics of each other's faith in such a way that

their faiths' commonalities and differences are clarified and respected.

Prison Reform: Church of the Second Chance

introduces the “radical” Christian principle of restorative justice, points out the critical need for comprehensive prison reform, and provides a strong critique of the U.S. prison system.

God's Creation Cries for Justice: Climate Change

expands and explores the principles of prudence, poverty, and the common good with a strong emphasis on how climate change will impact the poor at home and abroad.



Crossing Borders: Migration, Theology and the Human Journey

engages in the complex issue of immigration by providing participants a chance to find common ground and to discover more about

themselves, their values, our God, and the millions of people who are on the move in every part of the world.

Just PeaceMaking Initiative is a resource for small groups to deepen their understanding and practice of peacemaking by the intentional building of relationships dedicated to nonviolent transformation of conflict, the pursuit of social justice, and the creation of cultures of sustainable peace at every level of society.

This experience of God calling us beyond ourselves is foundational to the work of compassion and justice.

There is a little-known canonical norm that forbids a Catholic priest from celebrating Mass by himself. It is reminder—albeit a legalistic one—that we are Church, that we are a people, and that we understand and experience God best in community. Jesus did not call individuals to walk alone; he called them into the understanding that their lives were not their own, but rather a necessary part of a larger dream and mission where two or three (or more) are gathered.

This experience of God calling us beyond ourselves is foundational to the work of compassion and justice. We are meant to do this work of caring and healing in the company of each other. And when we do this work together, holding each other in prayer and love, we can do things we could never do on our own. People regularly approach me with the comment, “I am not sure what to do next.” My reply sometimes is that the first thing they might want to consider is to connect to a community of faithful, active people who can help them discern next steps AND support and sustain them, regardless of what ministry they choose.

So, in the name of the Gospel, it’s important that we are gathered as a people and made ready—together—for the work that awaits us. Social ministry is understood as work that we do in collaboration and community, not as solo artists isolated from the wisdom and care of our community of faith. I can’t foresee

a day when a JFM program will be offered online for people to do on their own; we need the fertile, provocative soil of each other’s company to make fresh choices and experience unexpected insight. There is great spiritual power when we gather.

Our cover story highlights one of the parishes around the country—Holy Cross in Springfield, Massachusetts—that has been using JFM programs for more than ten years. As parishioners of Holy Cross can testify, there is great benefit to welcoming and adding, year after year, new and enthusiastic people to the growing beehive of active church members who are committed to tending the hurting parts of this world. As the community of compassion grows, new potential, capacity, and projects can emerge that never would have been imaginable with fewer people engaged.

We encourage churches to think of our programs the way that they might think of the R.C.I.A. or Bible study – it’s something that needs to be done year after year to continue to build and broaden the beehive and create a vast community of care and commitment.

And, finally, here’s some news: This year, JustFaith Ministries is committing itself not only to our usual work of gathering and forming people for the work of social mission but ALSO to the organizing and action that makes for change and healing. In other words, we are investing ourselves in both “Gathering” and “Sending.” Given the needs

Notes

From Jack

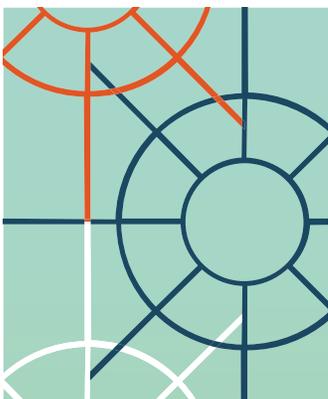


It’s important that we are gathered as a people and made ready—together—for the work that awaits us.

we have encountered around the country and the related skills of our staff, I think this represents a timely and important evolution in our mission. You will hear more about this in future editions of GradNet.

Stay tuned.

Jack



JustFaith Ministries provides graduates of our programs with timely resources through our **GradNet** email.

To receive our bimonthly resource, please email gradnet@justfaith.org

If you have comments, ideas or suggestions for an article, or if you would like to share digital pictures of Just Faith Ministries’ groups in action, please contact: gradnet@justfaith.org

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OUR MISSION

JustFaith Ministries is a non-profit organization that forms, informs, and transforms people of faith by offering programs and resources that sustain them in their compassionate commitment to build a more just and peaceful world.

Graphic Design: PLOW Studio, Louisville, KY

From *JustFaith Ministries*...

A NEW PUBLICATION FOR PERSONAL AND GROUP REFLECTION



Still In the Storm speaks for itself, quietly but intensely, making visible the suffering of a broken world. It will touch your heart, teach you to listen to the Spirit present in marginalized people and nurture in you courageous hope.

– Marie Dennis
Co-President of Pax Christi International

This book could and should change many lives.

– Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, Center for Action and Contemplation

AVAILABLE FEBRUARY 2015

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www.justfaith.org



A native of Scotland, Joe Grant has lived and ministered in a variety of contexts in Europe, the U.S. and Latin America. He brings breadth of life and depth of spiritual experience to his work as Director of Programs for *JustFaith Ministries*. In addition to writing numerous articles, Joe has authored a series of resources on Justice, Service, Prayer and Scripture for Catholic Youth Ministry. In 2004, he received the National Youth Ministry Award for the Gospel Values of Justice and Peace. He is also a co-founder of *CrossRoads Ministry*, a justice-based, inner-city retreat center in West Louisville. Joe lives with his family in Louisville, Kentucky.