

Parish Social Ministry Spring 2017 Highlights

IT'S SPRING: YOUR ANNUAL PLANNING SESSION

Success is the result of planning. Take time to plan for the year and Edit, Divest, and Invest.

(Before the committee takes action, create a mission statement immediately or after learning about Catholic social teaching. A mission statement is your guide; it serves as your North Star; it reminds you of your purpose. An effective mission statement is only one or two sentences. It explains what your group will do and how to accomplish it. A mission statement is a general statement and serves as an inspirational reminder of the committee's purpose.)

1. Begin your planning session by recapping the past year as precedence or guidance for the new year. Congratulate yourselves on your accomplishments. After a vacation nothing stirs warm memories like looking at the photographs.
2. **Ask yourselves, "Why do you do this work?"**
3. Review your current focuses and agree upon new directions. (Edit)

Ask yourselves if you still intend to support these activities. (Divest)

Brainstorm activities and agree on a direction(s) for the new year. Review these activities against your mission statement. (Invest)

A parish social ministry will likely have different areas of interests, issues, and activities depending upon the passions of its members. For example, a committee might focus on hunger, migrant ministries, abortion, global warming/sustainability, voter registration. Your focus depends upon the passions and interests of the committee and its members.

Parish Social Ministry encompasses a wide variety of issues. Just as we are each part of one Body, each issue is part of the collective Catholic social teaching. No committee can equally address them all so discern which ones you can address.

4. Distinguish between "social justice" and "charity" ("direct service") but include both.
5. If there are new ideas, consider if a new idea might fit into an existing activity or shared by another ministry. Don't spread yourselves too thin.

A new issue must have a leader, participation and perhaps a budget. Good ideas alone cannot be supported without the commitment of people to see them through.

6. Break into small groups based on interests, plan activities and budget (if appropriate) for the following year, come up with a suggestion on how to implement your social justice activity into your parish's faith formation programs. Plan activities by quarters (Summer, Fall, Winter, and Spring). (Invest)
7. Regroup, recap and recalibrate after you've completed your small group discussions.

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Other:

- IMIrJ (INTERFAITH MOVEMENT FOR IMMIGRANT JUSTICE) Sanctuary Cohort 2017: A six-month initiative with Oregon faith communities to build inter- and intra-congregational capacity to offer welcome and take committed and coordinated action for immigrant justice.
[Consider learning more about them.](#)

- Walk of the Cross: A Template
https://pdxlifejusticepeace.org/documents/2017/5/WOC_2017_final.docx

An ecumenical Walk of the Cross is a significant, faith-based activity that can unite your community. Consider a Vicariate effort for 2018.

- Parish Social Ministry Workshop: Do we need and want one in 2017?
October 2011 PSM Training
January 2013 Legislation Affecting Hunger in Oregon
January 2013 PSM Training
October 2013 PSM Training
April 2014 PSM Regional Training
July 2015 Social Action Summer Institute
October 2015 PSM Training
June 2016 Laudato Si focus

Those in attendance thought the Office should offer a Fall Parish Social Ministry workshop. What do the rest of you think?

- The annual Catholic Campaign for Human Development collection is the only second collection focused on social justice. [Click here to see how your parish did.](#)

Closing Prayer: the tears of solidarity

God of compassion,
Pope Francis challenges us to learn how to cry,
To brave that pain, and so enter into true solidarity with your people.
For those who face hunger,
For those who face war,
For those who face exploitation,
For those who face displacement,
I stand in solidarity.
For those who face unjust discrimination,
For those who face indifference,
For those who face a lack of opportunity,
For those who face a lack of health care,
I stand in solidarity.
But in truth, I stand a little reluctantly.
And I stand a little far off;
Detached and apart from the great human drama,
Lingering in the orchestra, even as you call me to the center stage.
Lord, help me to look again at what has been done to your people,
To their lives and to their dignity,
So that slowly, and then more strongly, I will allow myself to cry.
For it is only in those tears that we truly become one.
My trepidations fall away
And I step forward and stand anew.
Teach me to cry. Amen

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REMINDER: THE 2017 OFFERING OF LETTERS CAMPAIGN **Doing Our Part to End Hunger**

The 2017 Offering of Letters will help you and your church urge Congress to make funding decisions that put us on track to end hunger by 2030. We have made substantial progress against hunger and poverty in recent decades. So we know that it is possible to further reduce and perhaps virtually end hunger when we all do our part, including government.



A partnership between the Office of Life, Justice & Peace and Bread for the World.

We are challenging parishes to write letters to our legislators - and lots of them! Instead of sending them to Washington, D.C., we are collecting letters together and hand delivering them to make one big impact.

Last year, we collected 1100 letters, including from the St. John Fisher 7th Grade Class and the St. Francis (Sherwood) 3rd Grade Class.

Supported with prayer, these letters are a bold witness to God's justice and mercy.

When: From now until June 1st, we are asking parishes to write letters and send to the Office of Life, Justice & Peace at the Archdiocese of Portland, care of Matt Cato. We will hand deliver the letters to our members of Congress, and impress upon them that Oregon Catholics believe Congress should make funding decisions that put our country and the world on track to ending hunger by 2030. Persistent and faithful advocacy will be important in defending the interests of people who are hungry.

How: Letters can be written before or after Mass and collected on a single Sunday or over several weeks. People write letters, usually as a group, and present them as an offering to God before delivering them to their members of Congress. Bread for the World offers a kit with tips and tools, including hunger facts, real-life stories, videos, and a sample letter.

Nine parishes (in addition to the two classes) conducted letter-writing events last year; others for years. These have a significant impact on the decisions made in Congress.

We hope you will prayerfully consider participating. Set a date, gather paper and pens, and put your faith into action.

Need Help?

Find help, including tips, information on the issues, resources and a sample letter, at <http://www.bread.org/2017-offering-letters>.

Contact Bread for the World's organizer Robin Stephenson for a complimentary kit at rstephenson@bread.org or call 503-734-2012.

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THREE LETTERS A WEEK: ABC

A dozen parishioners listened to easy and effective suggestions for writing a letter to their legislators. Then taking three sheets of paper, they wrote three short letters to their two Senators and one Congressperson. In 40 minutes, which included getting up for snacks, three letters were written and stuffed into envelopes.

123, Easy as ABC.

Or AB: Write one letter to your State Senator and one letter to your State Representative.



WHY TAKE THE TIME TO WRITE?

Lawmakers see constituents as providing the human face of policy, and if you don't speak up, legislators tend to think everything is ok.

Speaking up matters. Writing a personal letter is effective. A personally-handwritten letter matters even more, especially when you include a personal story why this issue matters to you.

Even if your lawmakers agree with you, they need your story. And there will be a time when they disagree with you but you've already established a relationship because of your previous support.

In the time it takes to watch a rerun of CSI, you can have three letters written and sent. A week.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Tell them who you are.

Share your VISION for the community, state, society. What is the sense of the purpose and goal that drives you to seek the change you are working for? What is your aspiration and inspiration?

In one or two sentences, briefly and clearly share the PROBLEM you are trying to address.

Use a VALUE statement talking about the importance of the issue you're writing about (why does it matter?). Why is this important to you? Can you share a personal story?

Propose a SOLUTION: a call to action and the principles or outcomes it is designed to achieve.

Ask those with the power to make it happen to act (RESPONSIBILITY).

End on a positive note! Thank the Representative for their service to Oregon.

Include your name, address, and phone number.

"As individuals, all citizens have a duty to assist the poor through acts of charity and personal commitment. But private charity and voluntary action are not sufficient. We also carry out our moral responsibility to assist and empower the poor by working collectively through government to establish just and effective public policies." *USCCB, Economic Justice for All*

It's as easy as ABC. Or AB.