

## CATHOLIC CHARITIES PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY REPORT

The Feast of All Saints – Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010

Autumn has brought many good things to our deanery! I just wanted to share with you a few ways that Parish Social Ministry has been involved in various projects in our communities.

On Oct. 8-9<sup>th</sup> I attended a Parish Social Ministry workshop in Paynesville, MN “**Bringing the Gospels to Life**” (provided for anyone working in the area of Social Action in the state of Minnesota) along with Mary Lou Mulligan from St. Catherine’s in Luverne and Kathy Thurston from St. Gabriel’s in Fulda. It was very informative and inspirational, and as always, it was fun to connect with people working in various parishes in different Dioceses. The presenters were wonderful; the first evening we had a presentation that included lectio divina and reflections on biblical justice using the St. John’s Bible, from Barbara Sutton, Associate Dean for Formation and Outreach at St. John’s School of Theology. On Saturday we heard from Tom Ulrich, who is the Director of Constituency Relations for Catholic Relief Services and Jeff Korgen, Executive Director of the Dept. of Diocesan Planning for the Diocese of Metuchen, NJ. They gave presentations on such topics as: “Vision of Parish Social Ministry”, “Organizing a Parish Social Ministry Team” and “Sustaining Your Parish Social Ministry Program” among others. Recently I have been using some of the things that I learned at those sessions for some of the information presentations I have given (it’s been my pleasure to recently speak/present at the Slayton/Iona/Lake Wilson Confirmation retreat, to a joint meeting of the St. Anthony Lismore CCW & Catholic Daughters, the Deanery Faith Formation Directors meeting, the Currie Catholic Daughters meeting, the Slayton Area CCW meeting and to the teachers at St. Mary’s School here in Worthington). Kathy and Mary Lou were also very enthusiastic about the information we brought home from this training, and are eager to share it in their communities.

As many of you heard or experienced, our **Immaculee Ilibagiza** events on Oct. 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> at St. Mary’s Church in Worthington were wonderful! Many people attended (the Monday evening presentation was sold out at 700 tickets quite a while before the event) and were blessed by Immaculee’s story of hope and forgiveness. Please be sure to read the article in this month’s issue of the Courier.

It was a great pleasure to work on two different **Immigration Sessions** in the past few weeks. On October 13<sup>th</sup> we had an **Immigration Information Session** for adults at St. Catherine’s in Luverne. The presentation was sponsored by the “Our Lady of Fatima Social Ministry Committee” at St. Catherine’s and was given by Kathy Klos – attorney for the Immigration Law Center of MN – and me. Kathy, who practices here in Worthington, gave information about the current immigration laws and why they are so problematic. For example – did you know that in order to have a legal path to stay in this country to work, you must be a relative of a citizen or person with legal status, or be sponsored by an employer? There are a few other legal paths, such as for victims of abuse, but for the most part it is much more limited than we think. And even with a legal path – the waiting period to get to this country with documentation can be 2 to 20 years. That is a long time for families to be separated! And for people without those “connections” there is no path, no line to get into. It is no wonder that the bishops are advocating for comprehensive immigration reform. Kathy helped us to understand the legal issues, and I was able to provide information on the biblical background of immigration, and what the church is saying today. If you want more information on that please check out the bishop’s website:

[www.justiceforimmigrants.com](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.com)

This past Saturday, St. Mary’s Parish in Worthington sponsored an **Immigration Retreat**. The focus was different than the information session, we shared stories, prayed together, shared in the

Eucharist, and then had a community meal. Part of the afternoon included watching a DVD entitled “Dying to Live” – a documentary that tells the plight of the immigrant from a very spiritual perspective. Following that, we had small group discussions, and because we had wonderful translators, that all went very smoothly. People shared very personal stories of their journeys here, and their struggles. These testimonies were incredibly moving. We were reminded over and over through the stories and discussions that we are all God’s children, and in some way, we are all immigrants. Connections were made, and from this experience we are hoping that a small Christian community of mixed cultures will come together and help to bring more understanding of one another and of the issues to the community at large. It was truly a holy experience, one that those of us participating will not forget. We also had a wonderful team working together to make the retreat a reality. What a blessing it was to work with Fr. Jose, Fr. Jim, Mariana Gutierrez, John Steffel, Luz Cazares, Francisco Magana & Rose Weitgenant.

Some of you may remember the “Bread of Life” feeding ministry that began in Worthington a couple years ago. It was basically a ministry that offered a meal every Saturday to those in the community who could use that and many of our parish communities in the deanery sponsored and served meals there. The organizers took a break from it over the summer, but now there is some discussion about restarting it with some changes to hopefully encourage more participation. If you are interested in being involved in this ministry – or know someone who is – please let me know. We need more to be involved in our planning team.

I recently had a conversation with Bob Tereba, Director of Catholic Charities Diocese of Winona, about planning an “awareness” trip for people from the area to the Mission of San Lucas Toliman in Guatemala. Through my previous experience in campus and parish ministry, I have organized three of these trips in the past – and it always a very moving experience for those who participate, and many good things are brought back to the parishes by the participants. It will take some time to organize and because of weather considerations, winter is about the best time to go. So it will be a while (January of 2012) but please keep this in mind, and will be getting out more information soon!

In addition to all of this, I continue to meet with the Social Ministry teams at Luverne, Pipestone and Fulda – and now that Worthington is reorganizing their committee, I look forward to being a part of that. Some of these groups are talking about doing some enrichment together on the “whys” of Social Ministry, and we will be doing a little studying together. One of the things I’m encouraging the groups to consider is to take a little time at each meeting to reflect on the Bishop’s document “Communities of Salt and Light”. It’s a good place to start with Parish Social Ministry or to step back and reflect on as a group if you if you’ve already been at this a while.

May God bless you on your journey.

***Respectfully submitted:***

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