2011 Good News Report!

The Advocates for Justice Greater Cincinnati Parish Collaborative brings together parish pro-life and social justice committees around common public issues that have a strong foundation in Catholic Social Teaching. Facilitated by the Archdiocese Catholic Social Action Office, each year delegations from parishes gather to choose certain issues that will receive extra attention from all active parishes. The process serves to make a greater impact on selected issues and to enhance pro-life and social justice efforts at the parish level by building community, fostering collaboration, and sharing resources. The resulting efforts serve to compliment, not to replace, ongoing Archdiocesan and parish pro-life and social justice priorities.

This Good News Report reflects some of the great work that was done on the three priority issues taken up by the 2011 Advocates for Justice Collaborative: immigration reform, abolition of the death penalty, and criminal justice and jobs. Reports from those issue task forces are followed by news of pro-life and social justice efforts submitted to us by active parishes, including both on the Collaborative’s priority issues and their own. What is included in this report appears just as it was submitted to us with only minor changes for clarification.

Since this list only shares the input that was turned back in, it represents only a fraction of the wealth of outreach from our parishes to the world. Congratulations to everyone on their efforts to help advance God's Kingdom of life, peace and justice! In these struggling times, this is indeed good news!

IMMIGRATION TASK FORCE

† Gave presentations in 12 parishes using a newly developed program called “Restoring Order and Human Dignity”. Each presentation is specifically geared towards the pastor, parish staff, and pastoral council, and in some instances, other parish ministries are invited to participate. These parishes were: Immaculate Heart of Mary (Anderson), Our Lady of the Visitation (Mack), St. Martin of Tours (Cheviot), Our Lady of Sorrows (Monroe), St. Ann (Colerain Township), Ascension (Kettering), St. Xavier (Downtown), St. Vincent Ferrer (Kenwood), St. Monica-St. George, St. Denis (Versailles), St. Maximillian Kolbe (Liberty Township), and St. Michael (Ft. Loramie).

† Gave “Restoring Order and Human Dignity” presentation to 45 candidates in the Archdiocesan Diaconate Program at the seminary, to 40 members of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, which included Archbishop Dennis Schnurr and Bishop Joseph Binzer, and to 40 workshop participants in the Catholic Social Action Office’s annual Catholic Relief Services Conference, Imago Dei: Promoting Human Dignity through Solidarity, at the University of Dayton.

† Met with Cincinnati Police Chief James Craig to discuss ways to increase communication between the Police Department and immigrant community. As a way to accomplish this, the Immigration Task Force has met with representatives from the Cincinnati Police Department to discuss concrete steps to improve this communication.

† Met with Cincinnati and Columbus officials from Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) to discuss their practices and policies especially in regards to setting bonds, Secure Communities and prosecutorial discretion.

† Participated in rallies to support the DREAM Act, Julio Tellez, and other immigrants in danger of deportation.

† Supported the distribution and use of the pamphlet, Cincinnati, a City of Immigrants, and its use as a curriculum in area Catholic schools.

† Distributed information about the DREAM Act Sabbath, and making parishes aware of the use of the Immigration Control and Enforcement’s (ICE) implementation of Secure Communities and the 287G programs.
DEATH PENALTY TASK FORCE
† The task force successfully engaged parishes throughout the Cincinnati area to call Governor Kasich, sign petitions and send in letters to commute the death sentence of Shawn Hawkins in May and June 2011. Some parishes even hosted the family of Shawn as speakers (trained by the CCHD-funded Families That Matter program of the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center). Thankfully, the Gov. granted him clemency.
† The task force organized a comprehensive conference on the death penalty on Oct. 29 at Good Shepherd Church, titled “Promoting Life against the Penalty of Death”. Keynote presentations were given by Ohio death row exoneree, Joe D’Ambrosio and his spiritual mentor, Fr. Neil Kookoothe as well as Vicki Schieber of the Catholic Mobilization Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty, whose daughter was murdered. Panel discussions included judges, advocates, the Archdiocesan Family and Respect Life offices, members of the Hawkins family, and more. Over 100 attended.
† The task force promoted advocacy through the Collaborative network to call Governor Kasich to establish a moratorium against executions. They have urged the Ohio House to pass HB160 and the Senate to pass SB270, which will abolish capital punishment and replace it with life without parole. On Jan. 27, the task force organized a meeting with Ohio Senator Eric Kearney, co-sponsor of SB270, to encourage his ongoing leadership on this issue.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND JOBS TASK FORCE
† The task force has designed a successful educational program called the “Dismas Journey: The Road to Restoration and the Common Good,” which features prayer, Church teaching, personal stories from those released from prison, and small group dialogues. It is presented in partnership with the AMOS Project, HELP Program (both CCHD funded agencies), and Project West (a ministry of the Knights of Peter Clavier at St. Joseph Church). The Dismas Journey has been presented in 6 parishes, including St. Joseph (West End), St. Mary (Hyde Park), St. Vivian (Finnytown), Bellarmine Chapel, St. John (West Chester), St. Francis de Sales (East Walnut Hills), with another one scheduled for Our Lady of the Visitation.
† Following up from its Dismas Journey presentations, the task force pulled together attendees in December for a legislative training program at St. Vivian Church with the Ohio Justice and Policy Center.
† The task force met with Cincinnati Vice Mayor Roxanne Qualls in January to begin discussions about stronger city policies for promoting jobs for ex-offenders.
† On Feb. 29, as a result of task force activities, the Archdiocese testified at a hearing in Springdale before the Ohio Department of Corrections and Dept. of Youth Services to encourage future, state legislative efforts to establish better reentry and job programs for ex-offenders.

PRO-LIFE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE REPORTS FROM REPORTING PARISHES

St. Mary, Hyde Park
† St. Mary participated in the Dismas Journey last summer.
† We collected signatures on behalf of Shawn Hawkins.

St. Vincent Ferrer, Kenwood
† St. Vincent Ferrer’s Pastoral Council hosted the “Restoring Order and Human Dignity” presentation earlier this year.
† As a result, the parish will have two people (one of whom is fluent in Spanish) from the parish who will welcome Spanish speaking families to the parish community.

St. Bartholomew, Springfield Twp.
† Several times each year we have different drives for needed supplies for the pregnancy center at the Old St. Mary's church.
Presently we are having a diaper collection and all that have been donated will be taken to the Center on April 4. We had a Baby shower in December and all items were taken to the Center as well.

Parishioners have volunteered at the Drop Inn Center once a month, Our Daily Bread once a month, providing an evening meal at Tender Mercies once a month and Hunger weekend once a month where donations and cash are given to Valley Interfaith or Health Alliance to assist our neighbors who are in need.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Anderson Twp.

Immigration:
- IHM Parish Social Ministry Advisory and Coordination Commission (SMACC) offered our 4th Journey to Justice 1 1/2 day retreat on immigration. Sr. Juana Mendez, John Norman, Judy Muething, and Jim Burridge covered topics such as Catholic teaching of global solidarity and preferential option for the poor, what can we do today for comprehensive immigration reform, and social sin and grace. We visited SuCasa and heard stories from 3 undocumented families and are now writing letters in support of one of the individuals.
- IHM sells Fair Trade products each month after parish Masses as a means to help reduce the need for immigration.
- All the 7th and 8th graders at IHM School and PRP received City of Immigrants brochures. Brother Ed Kesler was interviewed by Latina NBC here in Cincinnati for his use in the brochures in his classroom. Also, brochures distributed to our Spanish Mass attendees and at SMACC committee members.

Abolition of the death penalty and criminal justice reform:
- SMACC speaker series on Sanctity of Life. Sr. Helen Prejean will be speaking at the parish in April of 2012.
- Creation of a subcommittee to work on the abolishment of the death penalty.
- We have had bulletin notices on the Death Penalty and Abortion issues as well as Heartbeat Articles (Heartbeat is the parish quarterly newsletter) on Death Penalty.
- March 2011, IHM did an empowerment grant of $1,000 to the Franciscan Brother Mike Murphy’s outreach program from St. Francis Seraph that offers ex-offenders access to job training, resources and mentoring, and GED help. The HELP program works directly with ex-felons and workers with other legal issues to help them find new jobs.

Other respect life and social justice activities:
- Sanctity of Life speaker series
  - Fr. Mike Seager spoke on end of life issues.
  - Sr. Helen Prejean will speak in April about the abolishment of the death penalty.
  - In the fall Fr. Earl Fernandes speaking on Abortion
  - Additional speaker on child protection will be scheduled for the fall also.
- March 2012. Cemetery of Innocents on church property facing Beechmont Avenue.
- Participated in the 40 Days of Life in Fall and Spring.
- Pro-Life Advocacy for Heartbeat Bill in Ohio and all Pro-Life legislation at all levels of government.
- Promotion of USCCB goals- conscience and religious freedom protection in health care
- Support Home Team Send-off Reception, Snack Bags and Prayer Letters for Student bus travelers on pilgrimage to Washington, D.C March for Life
- Pro-Life Film Screening Blood Money, the Business of Abortion

St. John the Evangelist, West Chester

On Feb. 13, 2012, our Parish hosted a presentation on The Dismas Journey. Presenters were: Bro. Mike Murphy & the men of the HELP Program; J. Dawson, Pam Franklin, and L. Price of Project WEST; Carlissa West of Tapestry. Paul Graham of the Amos Project was the moderator

St. Clare, College Hill

To advance the current issues, we are presently in process of scheduling the program “Restoring Order and Human Dignity” for a joint session of our Parish Council, Peace and Justice Commission and Celebrating Diversity Ministry.

All three issues were addressed, at least indirectly during our Fall 8 week Catholic Social Teaching “blitz” with the theme “Walk the Talk”. Each week concentrated on one of the major themes with bulletin inserts, displays at the church doors, homilies and worship music reflecting the that theme, large posters that remain on display
in the church hall, and a summary “ABC’s” of Catholic Social Teaching final bulletin insert. We have encouraged parish ministries to continue to use the phrase “An Opportunity to Walk the Talk” as they promote future activities. And we will now concentrate on each Catholic Social Teaching theme in 6 month segments. The first theme, starting in July, will be “Life and Dignity of Human person” which will allow us to more directly address the current issues.

† To address hunger, we sponsored the parish participation in Bread for the World’s Offering of Letters, and made financial donations in the name of the parish to Heifer International and the College Hill Feast of Love.
† To address the environment, we continue to encourage the use of reusable coffee mugs, plates and utensils at parish functions, including the Fish Fry, have placed a recycling bin in the church hall and published a Peace and Justice Clarity on the “Just Use of water”.
† To address the needs of the elderly and low income homeowners we have made a financial donation to Working in Neighborhoods and raked leaves as part of Prepare Affair.
† To address racism, in conjunction with our Celebrating Diversity Ministry, we hosted the College Hill Martin Luther King service.
† To address the Rights of Workers, we published a Peace and Justice Clarity on “Wage Theft”.
† To address “Life and Dignity of the Human person”, we invited Kay Brogle of Healthy Moms and Babes to sell her pins during a Fish Fry

St. Vivian, Finnytown
† To do advance our current issues of immigration reform, abolition of the death penalty, or criminal justice reform:
   ❖ Hosted a Dismas Journey Program to raise awareness of legal and social challenges faced by returning citizens when they exit the criminal justice system.
   ❖ Several members of our Social Action group joined Lobby day in Columbus and met with Ohio politicians to push the second chances initiatives.
   ❖ Our Respect Life coordinator attended the "Defending Life against the Sentence of Death" Archdiocesan Conference & published a summary article about the conference in the parish quarterly newsletter.
   ❖ Several members attended an immigration reform planning meeting last December sponsored by the AMOS group.
† Other respect life and social justice activities:
   ❖ Hosted two “Holy Hour for Life” prayer services which also featured a Respect Life Rosary and a witness from Project Rachel.
   ❖ Hosted an awareness meeting on Retirement security.
   ❖ Several members attended a Racial Justice summit at the Living Word Church. A second meeting is planned for May 4.
   ❖ Prepared and shared a monthly dinner with Grace Place Catholic Worker House, which provides transitional housing for refugees and homeless families.
   ❖ Continued our parish twinning relationship with St. Mary of the Angels Parish in New Orleans.
   ❖ School families participated in Operation Rice Bowl.

Our Lady of the Visitation, Mack
† The Pastoral Council hosted “Restoring Order and Human Dignity: immigration forum on 8-16-11
† Fabiola Arce spoke on DREAM Act and Immigration on 10-3-11
† We entered into an official “Covenant” relationship with St. Leo the Great Parish in North Fairmount. The signed agreement hangs on the wall at the entrance to Our Lady of the Visitation Church. Our Lady of Visitation and St. Leo the Great combined Parish Mission: Change of Heart: from fear to faith; from despair to hope; from self-Full-ness to love A regular column in our bulletin each week called “Covenant Corner” updates parishioners on what’s happening between the parishes. Some parishioners are tutoring Burundi refugees at St. Leo’s in English. We regularly feature stories from St. Leo’s newsletter in our bulletin and/or Voice
† Lasagna collection for Our Daily Bread on February 25 & 26. We collected 38 dishes of lasagna.
† Project 5000 – March 17 & 18…collection for St. Johns Social Service Center
† Sandwich Making Night: April 3 will be for Our Daily Bread.
† Sponsored a free showing of “The Human Experience” documentary at the Parkland Theater on Sunday, March 18 to raise awareness of homelessness and those in need in other countries including Africa.
† Outreach Ministries collection in March was for local tornado victims.
† Considering a Dismas Event on April 26

**St. Teresa of the Little Flower, Mount Airy**
† Little Flower Parish has collected alms for the following organizations:
  ❖ Magdalen House (Care of the homeless)
  ❖ Little Brothers, Friends of the Elderly (Care of the elderly who are alone)
  ❖ Old St. Mary’s Pregnancy Center (Care of the unborn & their mothers)
  ❖ WIN (Working in Neighborhoods) (Care of those facing home foreclosures, etc.)
  ❖ Parish Twinning Relationship with Sisters of Divine Providence in Madagascar
  ❖ Youth from McAuley and LaSalle High Schools taking mission trips to: Harlan, KY, New Orleans, Give Kids the World.
† We hosted speakers from these agencies to speak at our Wednesday evening Soup Suppers during Lent to share with the parishioners (60 – 75 in attendance each Wednesday) about their outreach to the poor. Each organization will receive several hundred dollars.
† Raised funds with a Christmas Shoppe and Fall and Spring Yard Sales to help build a school in Madagascar. Sent Christmas Cards to the Sisters in Madagascar. The parish hosted a Welcome Dinner for the Sisters in Leadership from Madagascar, France and the U.S.
† Involved the youth at Our Lady of Grace School in selling religious articles to raise funds for Madagascar. Also, a group of junior high students made placemats for our Soup Suppers and prepared Christmas and Easter Cards for the elderly sisters at St. Ann Convent Retirement Home.

**St. Martin of Tours, Cheviot**
† A Justice Way of the Cross
† Restoring Order and Human Dignity Presentation to Pastoral Council last Fall with follow-up information on immigration posted in parish.
† Sr. Alice Gerdeman gave talk on Death Penalty during Lent, and follow-up information was posted in parish.

**St. John the Baptist, Dry Ridge**
† Our activities this past year include participating in the Bread for the World Offering of Letters with a letter writing campaign after Masses one weekend,
† Supporting the CRS Fair Trade Program with monthly coffee, tea and chocolate sales, and
† Participating in the 40 Days For Life vigil in Mt. Auburn.

**St. Anthony, Madisonville**
† As part of our annual summer series, "Hot Topics for Hot Summer Nights," St. Anthony's held a special session on the Death Penalty and Restorative Justice with Father Len Wenke and Stephen Johnson-Grove (Ohio Justice & Policy Center). Our other session at to hear about our own parishioners' work in various ministries with Kay Brogle (Healthy Moms & Babes), Mary Kappesser (Parish Nurse Ministry), and Jessica Wabbler, (Madionsville Education and Assistance Center).
† Held a session on Faithful Citizenship in October 2011 to provide information on the US Catholic Conference of Bishops' document of Catholic Social Teaching related to the elections and non partisan information about the issues on the ballot.
† Once again we participated in Bread for the World's annual offering of letters.
† Mayra Alza, from the Intercommunity Justice & Peace Center talked about her immigration reform work with IJPC’s Youth Educating Society (YES) and the DREAM Act.
† Supported other ministries in the Madisonville and Cincinnati community such as MEAC and Habitat for Humanity project in Madisonville.
† Sponsored a special program on Care for Creation, informing parishioners about ways to live more simply and respect and protect our environment. St. Anthony's Peace & Justice committee is one of the most active committees in the parish and is currently working on developing a process for selecting measurable goals through which we can measure our progress.
Our Lord Christ the King, Mt. Lookout

† Activities Related to Immigration Reform: Individual parishioners attended events and programs related to economic issues, the Dream Act, legal aspects of immigration, and an all day conference that included sessions on problems with Detention Centers, Immigration and Control Enforcement (ICE) activities, Human Trafficking and “stories” of individual immigrants, including Dreamers. We also attended court sessions of individual immigrants to demonstrate support for these persons, and delivered bond funds to the Immigration Dept. in Columbus for immigrants being held in the Butler County Jail.

† Activities Related to Abolition of the Death Penalty: We attended a half-day program on specific issues related to the death penalty. The highlight of this program was the presentation by a man who had recently been found innocent after spending many years on Death Row. One of our parishioners also participated in the Task Force working on this issue by attending meetings and advocacy via phone calls to appropriate officials.

† Activities related to Criminal Justice Reform: Held a dinner session at the parish related to employment problems of ex-felons and the need for changes in the laws restricting their employment opportunities. Brother Mike and several ex-felons in his program presented information, stories, and responded to questions.

† Other respect life and social justice activities:
  ❖ Christ the King continued to have Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament following the 8:15 mass until 10am on Fridays. Parishioners were invited to pray for respect for life from birth to death and the end of abortion. Displayed the crosses on the lawn before and after Respect for Life weekend.
  ❖ Completed our second year of providing health care insurance for needy members of Father John Agyekum’s parish in Ghana. For 2011-12 we supported 449 individuals (adults at $20. ea. and children under 16 at $7. ea.). Support provided by individuals/families of Christ the King parish is supplemented by proceeds from the sale of Fair Trade coffee and other products. The National Health Insurance program in Ghana is further supported by the Ghana government through specific taxes.
  ❖ During Lent we (school & parish) participated in the Rice Bowl project sponsored by Catholic Relief Service and held our annual Fishes and Loaves project – collected non-perishable food every weekend and distributed it to area food pantries.