

PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY SURVEY REPORT, February 28, 2014

Beginning in February of 2013 Catholic Charities distributed a short one page survey to all parishes in the diocese (copy enclosed with this report). The purpose of the survey was threefold. One purpose was to compile an inventory of the extent of Parish Social Ministry activities inclusive of service activities and justice activities, that is, providing direct relief for those in need like feeding the hungry, and also, addressing the underlying social conditions that causes people to continue to need direct assistance services. The second purpose was to identify PSM education and development needs. The third reason was to consider conducting a series of convenings around the Diocese as a follow-up to the report. That is, if as expected the survey identifies trends in terms of activities ongoing in parishes and or interests for expansion of services, Catholic Charities might, during 2014, conduct a series of convenings (perhaps 2 to 4) around the Diocese. For these convenings we would invite those parishes involved in the identified activities to come together to share best practices, discuss problems and challenges and development or capacity building needs and if the interest is there explore opportunities for sharing, collaboration and or cooperation. As well, to these convenings, might be invited, parish representatives interested in initiating those services.

The survey was distributed by Joe Duffy and Phil Russo through a variety of delivery options including Deanery meetings, U.S. mail, hand delivery and electronically. When the roll out began pastors were promised this summary report as well as a Parish Social Ministry Resource Tool Kit. As of the compilation of this report we received completed surveys from 108 parishes out of 111.

The Tool Kit has been developed and includes:

1. Educational materials on Catholic Social Teaching as well as resources for additional such information and learning that can assist you in your social ministry efforts
2. An extensive number of offerings for direct service opportunities in parish and local communities, across the Diocese, elsewhere in the U.S., and around the world, and as above, additional contact information to further investigate such opportunities.
3. Background information on nonprofit agencies operating under Catholic auspices or that are not, but whose mission and activities are consistent with Catholic Social Teaching
4. General information about Catholic Relief Services (CRS) as well as specific CRS program offerings and resources suitable for individuals and parishes and even for subgroups such as young adults , religious ed students

Findings: There exists a tremendous amount of activity in parishes around hunger e.g. 45 have parish food pantries; 93 conduct food drives for their own pantries, Catholic Charities and others' pantries; 41 volunteer at Soup Kitchens like Market Street Mission and Eva's Village.

84 parishes conduct clothes drives. Some collect for the clothes closets at specific locations like Catholic Charities clothes closets at the Father English Center in Paterson, Hope House in Dover and the Partnership for Social Services Family Center in Franklin. Some are donated to other nonprofits

and even sent to parish supported programs in other countries. Some are actually used as fundraising programs at the parish level, the proceeds of which often support youth ministry and/or, parish social service efforts.

21 parishes have Parish Nurses (comment)

12 (we think this might be under reported) have formal twinings domestically or internationally (probably some go to Appalachia from this number).

5 parishes host self help groups e.g. AA (also may be under reported). 27 have a range of support groups (e.g. bereavement, unemployed, and other self help groups)

There is a strong interest in a range of social policy/advocacy issues, including: Abortion -37 parishes; Euthanasia – 11; Death Penalty – 6; Immigration – 12; Health Care -15; Environment – 12; and Poverty – 18

Next Steps:

- Identify three to four convening possibilities and invite those doing one or interested in learning about one to attend, basically for a show and tell and discuss opportunities for sharing and collaborating.
- Attempt to further develop the data base e.g. follow-up calls and visits, surf parish web sites

Concluding Remarks: We thank all the parishes for taking the time to complete the survey.

We think you will find the tool kit a useful resources whether you are early in the stages of developing Parish Social Ministry efforts in your parish, have a well developed program, or are somewhere in between. We welcome any feedback you may have on the contents of the tool kit and would especially welcome any suggestions for additions to it.

We welcome your questions. Please call or email us as you wish. Perhaps you are interested in what other parishes are doing something your parish is doing or want to connect to a parish doing something you are not doing. We will check with those parishes and with their permission, make the connection. Contact information is jduffy@patersondiocese.org 973-777-8818 ext 278.

And finally please say a prayer for Catholic Charities, our staff and supporters, and most especially those persons who we serve every day.

Blessings!

Joe Duffy & Phil Russo.