



**Archdiocese of Indianapolis - Catholic Charities
Introduction to
Parish Social Ministry**

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I. What is Parish Social Ministry?

The idea of Parish Social Ministry (PSM) was developed based on the USCCB document “Communities of Salt and Light” first published in 1994.

To put it simply, Parish Social Ministry (PSM) is the action that the faith community takes to live out the Gospel we proclaim and to grow in love with God and neighbor. By working with parishes, Parish Social Ministry aims to foster greater outreach and advocacy efforts, to educate parishioners to serve those who are poor and vulnerable, and to provide opportunities for spiritual growth.

PSM is deeply rooted in Scriptures, in our Sacraments, and in our rich tradition of our Church’s Social Doctrine. In *Deus Caritas Est* (God Is Love), Pope Benedict XVI writes that “love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to [the Church] as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel” (no. 22). Proclaiming the Word of God, celebrating the sacraments, and exercising the ministry of charity, he says, are “inseparable” (no. 25). In other words, there is an essential connection between our faith and the way we put love into action in the world. (Sacraments and Social Mission: Living the Gospel, Being Disciples)

Living our faith through service to others or perhaps seeing the face of Christ in our neighbors is not always easy. There can be many obstacles that stand in our path which can discourage us and weaken our resolve. A few obstacles may be:

- The need within our Parish and surrounding community seems too great. Where do we even start?
- We have an outreach committee,* but the volunteers have dwindled over the years to where only a select few are doing the work.

*Outreach committees can go by many names, examples would be; Peace and Justice, Social Concerns, Social Outreach, Outreach Committee, St. Vincent de Paul.

- We do a great job at providing charity to those in need within our local communities, but all our work seems to be only for the short term. It can be frustrating not seeing any lasting results.
- Our parish feels they are already doing enough and there is no need to learn more.

At Catholic Charities for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, we want PSM to be a source of support for parishes, families, and individuals as they seek to live their faith. To live out the Gospel we proclaim, we must respond as best we can to the diversity of needs and injustices that impact our world, but to do this we must be strategic.

The PSM Toolkit is a resource for all parishes within the Archdioceses of Indianapolis to assist them in living out their baptismal call to love their neighbor. Included in the PSM Toolkit are ideas for how to start a new PSM Team or perhaps strengthen the parish outreach team that is already in place within your parish. There are resource ideas on how to invite more volunteers, on the importance of parish communication, and on how to structure a productive meeting that goes beyond just reporting numbers. This Toolkit also emphasizes the importance of ongoing spiritual formation, not only for the PSM Team, but for the parish in general. It is through ongoing spiritual formation that we learn the reasons we are called to love, encounter and become a sign of Christ's love to each person we meet.

Pope Francis stated in his message on the First World Day of the Poor, "We may think of the poor simply as the beneficiaries of our occasional volunteer work or of impromptu acts of generosity that appease our conscience. However good and useful such acts may be for making us sensitive to people's needs and the injustices that are often their cause, they ought to lead to a true encounter with the poor and a sharing that becomes a way of life"

(Pope Francis -Message for the First World Day of the Poor, n. 3).

"Parishes are the home of the Christian community; they are the heart of our Church. Parishes are the place where God's people meet Jesus in word and sacrament and come in touch with the source of the Church's life... But until now, we have not specifically addressed the crucial role of parishes in the Church's social ministry... we are convinced that the local parish is the most important ecclesial setting for sharing and acting on our Catholic social heritage."

(USCCB, Communities of Salt and Light,

II. How is PSM rooted in the Gospel, Sacraments and Social Mission?

Gospel: PSM reinforces the proclamation of the word by bringing Jesus' call to life. In the Gospels, Jesus calls on everyone to care for the poor, vulnerable, and suffering people and to work for justice and peace. PSM helps to bring parishioners to a deeper understanding of the world of God.

Sacrament: Through the sacramental life of the church, the faithful come into contact with God in a deeper way and commit to bringing forth the kingdom of God on earth. The sacramental life of the parish reinforces PSM by commissioning us to live the Gospel through baptism and confirmation, by sustaining us through the contract with God's healing love as experienced in the sacrament of reconciliation, and by uniting us to one another through the Eucharist. PSM reinforces the administration of sacraments by providing opportunities for parishioner to act on the mission with which we are charged with.

Social Mission: PSM helps the faithful to grow in love with God and neighbor by drawing them to the side of the most vulnerable and asking them to be the presence of God's love. Jesus encourages us to go beyond fulfilling the physical needs of the person to becoming a sign of Christ's love to the person. Through the Church's rich social doctrine, primarily through understanding and living the principals of Catholic Social Teaching, the church makes this call relevant in our day by evaluating social justice issues through Gospel principals.

(CCUSA - Catalysts & Collaborators in Social Ministry, 2008)

III. How would having a PSM Team assist our Parish?

“Effective social ministry helps the parish not only do more, but to be more – more of a reflection of the Gospel, more of a worshipping and evangelizing people, more of a faithful community.”

(Communities of Salt and Light – USCCB)

- A PSM Team helps tie together living the fullness of our faith through Gospel, Sacraments, and Service.
- A PSM Team can share resources instead of reinventing the wheel.
- A PSM Team brings ministries together to support each other instead of competing for resources.
- PSM assists parishioners in understanding the importance of “encountering our neighbors”, “walking with our neighbors”, instead of “just doing things for our neighbors.”

IV. What a Parish Social Ministry Team IS and IS NOT

PSM IS NOT: PSM is not just a committee for ministries to report on their work. It is not the work of a few people who are responsible for all the direct service provided within the parish. It is not about just “maintaining” the work of a direct service ministry.

PSM IS: PSM is a team whose function is to assist those within the parish to understand that the Catholic Social Mission is an essential part of the faith life of every able Catholic AND that each ministry is important to the life of the parish.

A challenge for each of us is to completely rethink the focus, role and structure of social mission of the parish. It is about moving from just “maintaining” a ministry to formation and growing the ministries.

The function of the PSM team would be more of leaders, organizers and planners. They can still be the doers, but a PSM Team needs to understand their role is not just a come together and report, but to come together to:

- Organize events
- Invite people to participate
- Recruit new people to volunteer
- Orchestrate new ministry ideas and ongoing spiritual formation around social mission
- Create opportunities for all members of the parish to be involved in the social mission of the Church!

The *Communities of Salt and Light* summarizes three key messages that have implications for the responsibilities and structures of the “team”:

1) Our social mission should be **integrated throughout parish life**. As the story of the Last Judgment in Matthew’s Gospel reminds us, in the end we will all (not just the usual suspects on the social concerns committee) be judged by how we have cared for the least among us. This means that the Catholic social mission is an essential part of the faith life of every able Catholic. It must be woven into education programs so that all Catholics learn about Catholic Social Teaching. It must be reflected in the prayer and worship of our faith community. And it must include a wide range of opportunities for members of our parishes to act on the social dimensions of our faith.

(2) Social concerns committees, in their leadership capacity, **should organize the work, not do the work**. The primary role of these leaders is to provide opportunities, to invite and recruit members of their faith community to become involved in Catholic social mission. For example, the leaders of the parish’s program to support a local soup kitchen can do their job well only by creating opportunities and inviting other parishioners to volunteer. This is not to suggest that members of “Coordination Team” should absent themselves from being involved in the doing of the work; rather, in the role of leader/organizer/planner, the critical task at hand is to organize, invite, recruit, orchestrate and create opportunities for the parish—and *all* of its members—to become engaged.

(3) Parish social ministry must include both **efforts to provide direct service or outreach to people in need and efforts to work for justice and peace by shaping the policies, programs, and structures of society.**

(Organizing a Parish Social Ministry Coordination Team – USCCB)

V. The Need for BOTH Direct Service and Social Justice!

“Catholic teaching calls us to serve those in need and to change the structures that deny people their dignity and rights as children of God. Service and action, charity and justice are complementary components of parish social ministry. Neither alone is sufficient; both are essential signs of the gospel at work. A parish serious about social ministry will offer opportunities to serve those in need and to advocate for justice and peace. These are not competing priorities, but two dimensions of the same fundamental mission to protect the life and dignity of the human person.”

(Communities of Salt and Light – USCCB)

In the ministry of loving our neighbors, the need for BOTH Direct Service and Social Justice is essential. While Direct Service addressed the immediate needs of the vulnerable, Social Justice transforms structures in order to end the root causes of their suffering.

We are called to feed the hungry AND we are called to fight for an end to hunger.

VI. When putting together a Parish Social Ministry Team, what should we be looking for?

It is important to remember that no one person possesses all the necessary gifts for an effective PSM Team, but the body as a whole is strengthened by each person's skills.

“Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body,’ it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body,’ it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended.”

(1 Corinthians 12:14-18)

Parish Social Ministry Team members should; (**)

- Decide on a Model that fits your parish best.
- Put together a good team! DO NOT go it alone.
- Stay Connected! To the Pastor, Parish Staff and Parish Council.
- During the formation stage of the PSM Team, make sure you create a mission statement/ objectives/ action plans and goals.
- Be interested in the needs of others
- Have a sense of vision
- Recognize the importance of being a servant to the community
- Be willing to learn and live out the principals of Catholic Social Teaching
- Have an active prayer and faith life, which includes faithfully attending Sunday Mass
- Being open to listen to the concerns of parishioners
- Have a desire to foster the gifts of others
- Foster an openness and appreciation for diversity
- Show care and compassion for others
- Demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively towards a consensus and the common good
- Have a positive outlook with a sense of humor
- Have time available to attend meetings and team activities
- Stay informed and connected with the Archdiocesan Social Concerns – Catholic Charities office.

VII. Ongoing Faith Formation

It has often been said one of the best kept secrets of the Catholic Church is its beautiful rich tradition of Social Doctrine which has been summarized in the principals of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). The depth and richness of the traditions of CST affirm that all life, from conception to natural death, has inherent dignity and a right to life consistent with that dignity. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) defines CST as “a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society.” In other words, there is an essential connection between our faith and the way we put love into action in the world. It is through ongoing spiritual formation that we learn the reasons we are called to love, encounter and become a sign of Christ’s love to each person we meet.

“A prayer that does not lead you to practical action for your brother – the poor, the sick, those in need of help, a brother in difficulty – is a sterile and incomplete prayer.”

(Pope Francis – Angelus, 7/21/13)

“The most important setting for the Church’s social teaching is not in a food pantry or in a legislative committee room, but in prayer and worship, especially gathered around the altar for the Eucharist. It is in the liturgy that we find the fundamental direction, motivation, and strength for social ministry. Social ministry not genuinely rooted in prayer can easily burn itself out. On the other hand, worship that does not reflect the Lord’s call to conversion, service, and justice can become pious ritual and empty of the gospel.”

(USCCB, Communities of Salt and Light – 1994)

Spiritual formation resources can be found at www.archindy.org/psm

VIII. How to Start a PSM Team from Scratch

If your parish is starting fresh or from scratch in starting an social outreach program, below are some steps to assist you along the way. (**)

***** Important!!** Before the official process of introducing PSM to the parish, it is absolutely key that the Pastor or PLC is on board with moving forward in establishing a PSM team within the parish. Invite the pastor or PLC to be a part of the process, as much as their time permits. Reassure them that part of the PSM process is having a well-established communication system in place between the PSM Team, the pastor/ PLC, and the parish council. **When speaking to the parish priest and council, speak to the purpose of PSM and how it reinforces other facets of parish life.**

To Begin:

- Find 3-5 parishioners who have a similar desire to establish a PSM Team. Research the process. Don't hesitate to reach out to the Archdiocesan Social Concerns office for resources to begin the process.
- READ the USCCB document, *Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish* (visit www.usccb.org and search Communities of Salt and Light for a downloadable version)
- Meet and discuss what model of PSM would work best for your parish setting.
If you are a small parish and wonder if your parish is large enough to sustain a PSM Team, explore the option of teaming up or pairing up with another parish within your area.
- Discuss what PSM IS and IS NOT. Clarify PSM Team structure and purpose.
- Reach out to the Archdiocesan Director of Social Concerns to inform them that your parish is exploring a PSM Team. The Director of Social Concerns will provide you with a Parish Assessment to help you determine what are your parish strengths and possible areas of growth.
- Invite/ recruit additional parishioners to be members of the PSM Team. A PSM Team has an average of 8 to 12 members.
- Develop a PSM Mission Statement. The mission statement should only be a one or two sentences that reflect "who we are," "what we do," "what we stand for," and "why we do it."
- Ongoing Spiritual Formation of the PSM Team is critical to the success and sustainability of the team. Each member must have a clear understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and its relevance to their faith journey.
- Develop an Annual Plan or objectives for the year. Have an evaluation process in place to measure what has worked, what has not worked or what could have been done differently.

Importance of a Mission Statement

Parish Social Ministry Teams should have a mission statement. A mission statement briefly communicates the essence of the PSM Team to the parish community. A good starting point is to read the mission statement of your parish. A mission statement should be no more than 1 to 2 sentences and state: who we are, what we do, what we stand for, and why we do it.

Importance of a Chairperson

Meetings tend to go more smoothly if there is a designated Chairperson. But their job is more than just calling the meeting to order. Please keep in mind; it is best if a Chairperson is not heading a PSM sub-committee while acting as the Chairperson.

Below is a sample job description for a Chairperson.

- To build relationships with the pastor and key leaders of the parish. Ex: parish council, school principal, parish staff, diocesan social concerns office, ecumenical connections.
- To recruit more leaders.

- To be responsible for assisting the sub-committees to work together and create a vision for the PSM Team and that all people of the parish are included, especially the easily overlooked parish population.
Ex: elderly, homebound, young families, different ethnicities/minorities, new converts
- To Help create a paper trail so there is accountability.

Importance of an Annual Plan

An Annual Plan will provide the PSM Team with focus and objectives for the year. That doesn't mean that items can not be added to the annual plan as new issues or emergencies (humanitarian or natural) take place within the local communities or around the world.

An Annual Plan will also help keep the PSM Team keep in mind important liturgical events, or days/months where the Catholic Church has designated as a special time to focus on a social issue.

Ex: January is national Poverty Month.
 February 8th is the Feast Day for St. Josephine Bakhita, patron saint of human trafficking victims.
 Lent there is a focus on the global church through the CRS Rice Bowl.
 June is Refugee Month.
 October is Respect Life Month.
 November is the national Catholic Campaign for Human Development 2nd collection.

IX. But we are not starting from Scratch – so how can PSM help our parish?

PSM is meant to be a resource for further development, not a hindrance to existing efforts that are well established. There are many PSM resources that are available to all parishes; such as how to recruit more volunteers, how to structure a meeting to go beyond just reporting, or ongoing spiritual formation resources that are centered on the social doctrine of the Church.

Below are three models on how to structure a Parish Social Ministry Team. Each of the models can be adapted to fit the needs of your parish. The second model is a model that may be a better fit for parishes that already have a outreach type committee. It helps adapt aspects of PSM into the outreach ministry already in place.

X. PSM Models

PSM is not a one size fits all model. Whether you are a parish of 200 individuals or 2000 families, there is a PSM model that can assist your parish in living the Gospel of loving our neighbors. (**)

No matter which model fits best with your parish, ALL PSM models encourage:

- That the “organizing” and “doing” of social ministry is taking place.
- That the social ministry is woven throughout the parish.
- That the social ministry includes a variety of opportunities for parishes to act through direct service AND social justice.

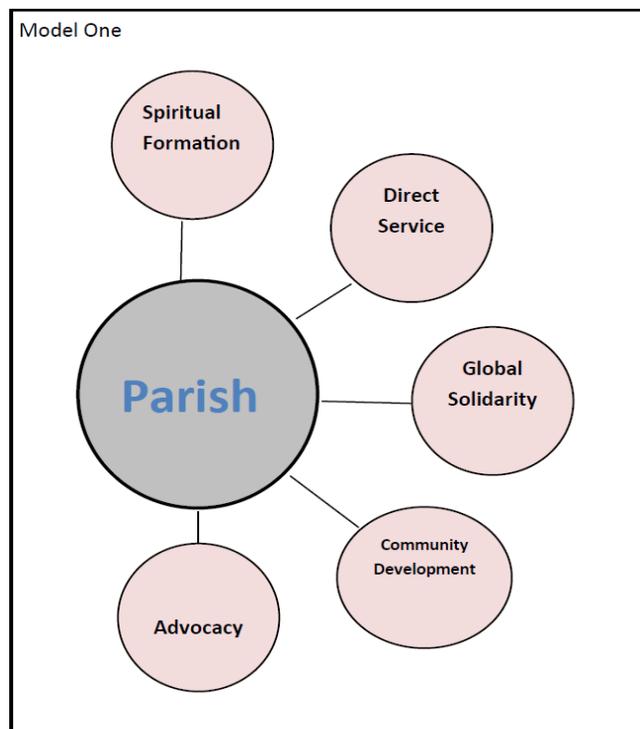
In *Communities of Salt and Light*, the bishops highlight seven elements for effective parish social ministry:

- Prayer and Worship
- Education and Formation
- Family, Work, Citizenship
- Outreach and Charity
- Legislative Advocacy
- Community Organizing
- Global Solidarity

Model One:

In this model, there are 5 areas of activities or ministries. Each of the ministry teams encompasses either one or several of the 7 elements highlighted in *Communities of Salt and Light*. The Parish Social Ministry Team is made up of representatives from each of these ministries.

Each of the ministries would typically include **sub-committees** that have a particular interest or mission focus; these might include, for example, hunger issues or environmental concerns or respect life issues. The sub-committees might be focused on the agenda of a particular organization like St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Relief Services, Justice for Immigrants or other poverty relieving initiatives. The focus areas will vary among parishes.



Model Two:

Model Two may work for parishes that already have established social concerns or community outreach type committees where each of the ministries are already defined and meeting to share their ministry updates. As you will see in the example, each of the ministry sub-committees that are listed across the top and to the right have to consider how their work can and should be integrated with the 5 PSM ministries outlined as areas of importance in *Communities of Salt and Light*.

Sub-committees

PSM Ministries	Food Pantry	Twinning Parishes or CRS	Respect Life	St. Vincent de Paul	Creation Care
<i>Spiritual Formation</i>	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Direct Service</i>	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Global Solidarity</i>		X	X		X
<i>Community Development</i>	X		X	X	X
<i>Advocacy</i>	X	X	X	X	X

Model Three:

Model Three is a hybrid of both Model One and Model Two. As each parish’s dynamics are different, each PSM Team must adapt to their parish needs.

For example, a PSM Team may decide that one of the 5 PSM Ministries may need to be broken down even further.

- The Spiritual Formation team may discern that there are several subcommittees that are needed under this core PSM ministry.
 - o Perhaps such as an education and formation subcommittee that assists or collaborates with parish and school staff in regards to understanding Catholic Social Teaching.
 - Or
 - o A prayer and worship subcommittee that would provide a Prayer of the Faithful that correlates with a specific social issue or host an event before or after mass that ties a social issue with the USCCB calendar.
 - Ex: Feb. 8th is the International Day of Prayer for Victims of Human Trafficking and the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita, who is the patron of trafficking victims. As part of human trafficking awareness, have Anti-Trafficking literature available after mass or host a CRS Fair Trade sale. (Make sure the pastor is aware of the event so if he chooses he can incorporate the Church’s social teaching in regards to human trafficking.)

XI. Purpose of Meetings

- 1) Provides a setting for creating and maintaining an effective system of communication about PSM activities. Through effective communication, the PSM Team helps ensure that various leaders and activities do not bump into each other or are duplicated.
- 2) Provides a setting where each of the sub-groups or ministries can discuss how they can support each other in the different ministry opportunities presented to the parish. For instance, two questions to always be asking each other during meetings;
How can we collaborate together?
How can we help recruit volunteers for different events?
 - Example: Anti-Trafficking Awareness Event. Leaders of each of the sub-ministries collaborate together to host the event. Leader(s) of Direct Service would work with volunteers to collect goods to give to a local organization that is rescuing children and adults from human trafficking. Global Solidarity could host a CRS Fair Trade Sale calling attention to ethical purchasing and the nature of labor trafficking. Advocacy would host a letter writing campaign. Community Development, Global Solidarity and Spiritual Formation would collaborate on educating the parish on local and global human trafficking and Church teaching on the Dignity of all Human Persons.
- 3) Ensures that each ministry's leaders or team produces some type of Annual Plan so that efforts are well thought out and each of the tasks has been identified.
- 4) Provides a forum where the PSM Team leaders can discuss and propose new parish social ministry initiatives. Example: Explore the options for a food pantry or a Care for Creation ministry.
- 5) Provides accountability. If a PSM leader(s) does not have anything to report after several meetings, they may not be doing their job.

XII. Parish Communication is Important!

It is VERY, VERY important to make sure the parish stays informed on the work of PSM. This not only helps people understand their parish responsibility, but also to help them see the fruits of their work.

- First and foremost, it is Important to have a Communication Plan.
- When a parish has a good ongoing Communication Plan, it opens up doors for more volunteers and active involvement from the parish!
- Don't forget about your parish school (where applicable)! Having a good communication plan between the parish and school will help build cohesion.

Below are some tips for parish communication.

- Bulletin Announcements
- Parish & School Newsletters
- Posters and bulletin boards
- E-mail newsletters
- A table at Coffee and Doughnuts that highlights the PSM work.
- Facebook Page
- Provide the parish a yearly summary of successes and accomplishments
- Stories and photos to the Criterion, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis weekly newspaper
- Signs on the parish lawn
- Personalized letters sent to parish homes
- Information about upcoming events on the local cable access channel

XIII. Meeting Structure

Below is an example of a meeting format for PSM.
(remember to have someone taking notes)

- 1) **Begin with Prayer** -
Possible resources for prayers: www.usccb.org, www.crs.org/resource-center
- 2) **Spiritual Formation** - This could be done in several ways such as having a speaker discuss a certain topic, participate in an ongoing spiritual formation series such as the USCCB's "CST101" series or the "Sacraments and Social Mission" series, or participating in a Gospel reflection and discussion. One idea in regards to a Gospel reflection is to choose a Gospel parable and discuss how it is tied into the Church's social mission. Any of these examples could be facilitated by member of the team or an invited guest.
- 3) **Discuss Old Business** - This is where there would be a recap of ministry events. It is important to remember to go beyond recapping business, but part of the process is to:
 - Measure or evaluate the success of the event or work of the ministry
 - Discuss which principals of CST where being lived out through the ministry
- 4) **Discuss New Business** – New Business is where the different ministries discuss upcoming events and how each of the ministries would provide support for the event. Example: The Pro-Life Ministry hosts baby showers for pregnant mothers who are in need of some extra help. Each baby shower is hosted by one of the parish ministries or groups within the parish. Examples of a hosting group could be the Youth Group or St. Vincent de Paul. Each of the ministries helps promote the event and recruit volunteers. The entire parish is invited in the process through either donating a designated baby item or praying for the mother and her child via the prayer cards have been placed in the pews. (Example adapted from Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Indianapolis)

New Business could include new project ideas or proposals to consider. This could be where the group evaluates areas for growth. Example: Is there is a need or desire for a ministry that is not being offered within the parish. If yes, what would that look like? What would the exploratory process look like? Designate volunteers of the team to pray, research, and learn more about that issue. Their job is to take the information they gathered back to the team as whole. This could lead to a Faith Formation topic.
- 5) **End with Prayer**
- 6) **Socialize** – It is important to remember to allow time to socialize with a few refreshments.

XIV. Volunteers

Below are some tips for inviting and working with volunteers.

- Personal Invitation! Don't underestimate the beauty of personal connection. Get to know the person. What brings them joy? What ministries are important to them?
- A table at the Coffee and Doughnuts that highlights the work of the PSM. When people can ask questions and hear about the tangible work of the PSM, they are more likely to volunteer.
- When recruiting for the PSM sub-committees, make sure you are not recruiting someone just to fill a "hole" on the committee.
- Make sure all volunteers have a clear understanding of what is Catholic Social Teaching; how their volunteer time is tied into their faith and their spiritual lives.
- Provide the volunteer with clear directions on what they are being asked to do. No one likes to volunteer to end up only standing around because of lack of direction.
- Provide a start time and end time for volunteers.
- Make sure you do not forget about reaching out and providing volunteer opportunities for the elderly, the homebound, young families, school families, new parishioners or RCIA candidates.
- Follow up with the volunteers after their designated volunteer time. Ask for their feedback: what did they enjoy or did not enjoy? Was there an impactful moment they would like to share about their volunteer time? Do they have any suggestions on ways something could have been structured more effectively?
- Let the volunteer know how their time and talent had an impact on our parish and surrounding communities.
- **VERY IMPORTANT: Celebrate your Volunteers!!!**

Suggestion: Adapted from Our Lady of Perpetual Help in New Albany, IN.

Celebrate volunteers each year during designated weekend masses. Each of the ministries within the parish are named and as they are named, people who have volunteered for those mentioned ministries, whether it was for 10 minutes or several hours, are asked to stand to be recognized by their parish community. Not only does this act as a way to list all the parish (and school) ministries, but helps those who have volunteered know they are appreciated and valued. A parish could then host a Ministry Fair after all the masses.

XV. Some PSM pitfalls to Avoid

The USCCB document, *Communities of Salt and Light*, lists some important pitfalls to avoid for a PSM Team.

- Do not isolate PSM from the rest of the parish. A pitfall for PSM Team leaders would be to isolate themselves. By treating the parish as a target rather than a community to be served and empowered.
- In working with social ministry, a big danger is "potential partisanship, the temptation to try to use the parish for inappropriate political objectives. We need to make sure our faith shapes our political action, not the other way around. We cannot forget that we pursue the kingdom of God, not some earthly vision or ideological cause." A good reference to assist a PSM team to be grounded in their faith and political action is ***"Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the USCCB."***

PSM serves as Ambassadors of Good News – The Common Mission of ALL Ministries

- Avoid divisiveness. It is important to emphasize the common ground among social service and social action, education and advocacy, pro-life and social concerns, economic development and environmental commitment. Members of an effective PSM Team lead with their faith and not their politics.
- A common pitfall is to try to do too much on too many issues. Without clear priorities and an effective plan of action, the PSM can become overwhelmed and burned out. It can also cause confusion within the parish and appear that the PSM Team is not organized.
- It is important to remember that the different ministries within the parish are the parishes, not the PSM Team. It is natural to have some ownership with a ministry, but the job of the PSM Team is to help educate and provide opportunities for the entire parish to engage in.
- “The final and most serious danger is for the parish leaders to act as if the social ministry of the Church was the responsibility of someone else. Every believer is called to serve those in need, to work for justice, and pursue peace. Every parish has the mission to help its members act on their faith in the world.”

“We need to build local communities of faith where our social teaching is central, not fringe; where social ministry is integral, not optional; where it is the work of every believer, not just the mission of the a few committed people and communities.”

(USCCB, Communities of Salt and Light – 1994)

Contributing documents: Communities of Salt and Light - Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish (USCCB); Organizing a Parish Social Ministry Coordinating Team (USCCB); JustFaith Ministries – Organizing Parish Social Ministry; Catalysts and Collaborators in Social Ministry (CCUSA).

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