

COMMUNITIES OF SALT AND LIGHT WORKSHOP

I. Welcome/Introduction and Opening Prayer

God, Source of all light,
we are surrounded by the darkness of the injustices experienced by your people,
the poor who are hungry and who search for shelter,
the sick who seek relief,
and the downtrodden who seek help in their hopelessness.
Surround us and fill us with your Spirit who is Light.
Lead us in your way to be light to your people.
Help us to be salt for our communities
as we share your love with those caught in the struggles of life.
We desire to be your presence to the least among us
and to know your presence in them as we work through you
to bring justice and peace to this world in desperate need.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.
(from [Communities of Salt and Light: Parish Resource Manual](#))

II. Introduce Each Other

Who are you, what is your ministry and what is your biggest frustration and biggest success in social ministry? (Responses will be written on newsprint and frustrations should be addressed during the workshop.)

III. Overview

- Read Gospel and discuss theological implications of salt and light.
- Discuss framework of Communities of Salt and Light in the parish setting.
- Engage in small group discussions.
- Discuss structure of Social Concerns Committee.
- Address frustrations.

IV. Read Matthew 5:13-16—Theological reflection on symbols

Salt is a valuable seasoning, and is also used to preserve meat. In the Hebrew Bible, salt was rubbed on newborns to drive away evil spirits. Salt was used in Jewish worship to season incense. It was a sign of covenant to salt bread and share it between two leaders. Salt can lose its flavor when it is exposed to heat, so Christians who fail to act as salt become useless.

Light in the Hebrew Bible is the divine, and believers can be described as enlightened, or being part of the divinity.

Combined Salt and Light—followers of Jesus, as salt (preserving the covenant) and light (symbol of divine presence) should be obvious in the world.



V. Communities of Salt and Light

Give out copies of synopsis below, and discuss.

VI. Small Group Work

Give out questions below. Each group should consist of three to four people. Adults learn best through practical experience, so invite them to discuss common issues and solutions. They will then share with the group the main commonalities.

Social Concerns Committee

1. Ask whose parishes have social concerns/social justice/social ministry committees. The people from parishes with committees will have much to offer by drawing upon their experiences in this part of the session.
2. Describe the difference between “Doers” and “Organizers.”
 - *Doers* make sure specific tasks get done by putting solutions into action. They are energetic and dedicated to completing a task, learning new ministry skills, continuing with ongoing formation, and providing ideas to shape planning. Ideally, they visit the homebound, write letters to legislators, participate in mission trips, i.e., travel to Haiti and other developing countries, etc.
 - *Organizers* are strategic planners. They recruit leaders, bring people together, develop skills and formation in others, and facilitate problem-solving discussions and meetings. They are good listeners and communicators, and ensure social ministry is woven through liturgy and create effective systems of communication in social ministry. They serve as good liaisons with the church staff.
3. Describe how to recruit and organize a core committee.
4. Address problem-solving regarding frustrations participants shared and recorded on newsprint at the beginning of the workshop.

VIII. Closing Prayer

To have hope is to believe that history continues, open to the dream of God and to human creativity. To have hope is to continue affirming that it is possible to dream of a different world, without hunger, without injustice, without discrimination. To have hope is to be a courier of God and a courier of men and women of goodwill, tearing down walls, overcoming borders, building bridges. To have hope is to believe in the revolutionary potential of faith...is to leave the door open so that the Spirit can enter and make all things new. To have hope is to believe that life wins over death. To have hope is to begin again as many times as necessary. To have hope is to believe that hope is not the last thing that dies. To have hope is to believe that hope cannot die, that hope no longer dies. To have hope is to live. Amen.



(Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Boromeo- Scalabrinians, Honduras; *Prayer Without Borders: Celebrating Global Wisdom*, CRS)

Remind people of resource materials (see below).

Communities of Salt and Light Summation

I. Anchoring Social Ministry: Prayer and Worship

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.

II. Sharing the Message: Preaching and Education

We are called to share our social teaching more effectively in our parishes than we have. Our social doctrine is an integral part of our faith; we need to pass it on clearly, creatively and consistently. We urge those who preach not to ignore the regular opportunities provided by the liturgy to connect our faith and our everyday lives, and to share biblical values on justice and peace. Our social doctrine must also be an essential part of the curriculum and life of our schools, religious education programs, sacramental preparation and Christian initiation activities.

III. Supporting the Salt of the Earth: Family, Work, Citizenship

Our parishes need to encourage, support and sustain lay people in living their faith in the family, neighborhood, marketplace and public arena. It is lay women and men, placing their gifts at the service of others. The most challenging work for justice is not done in church committees, but in the secular world of work, family life and citizenship.

IV. Serving the Least of These: Outreach and Charity

Parishes are called to reach out to the hurting, the poor and the vulnerable in our midst in concrete acts of charity. Thousands of food pantries hundreds of shelters and uncounted outreach programs for poor families, refugees, the elderly and others in need are an integral part of parish life.

V. Advocating for Justice: Legislative Action

Parishes as local institutions have special opportunities to develop leaders, to promote citizenship, and to provide forums for discussion and action on public issues. The voices of parishioners need to be heard on behalf of vulnerable children, born and unborn; on behalf of those who suffer discrimination and injustice; on behalf of those without health care or housing; on behalf of our land and water; and on behalf of our communities and neighborhoods.

VI. Creating Community: Organizing for Justice

Parish leaders are taking the time to listen to the concerns of their members and are organizing to act on those concerns. Parish participation in such community efforts provides concrete handles to deal with key issues and builds the capacity of the parish to act on our values.



VII. Building Solidarity: Beyond Parish Boundaries

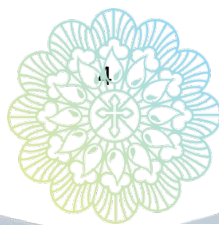
Parishes need to be bridge-builders, reminding us that we are part of a Universal Church with ties of faith and humanity to sisters and brothers all over the world. Programs of parish twinning, support for Catholic Relief Services, mission efforts, migration and refugee activities and other global ministries are signs of solidarity in a shrinking and suffering world. Advocacy on human rights, development and peace through legislative networks and other efforts are also signs of a faith without boundaries and a parish serious about its social responsibilities.

What we have learned:

1. Social ministry is rooted in faith.
2. Respect for diversity in ministry: racially, ethnically, economically and ideologically.
3. While social justice is a task for every believer, strengthening Parish Social Ministry depends on the skill and commitment of the parish leaders—to preach, participate, set priorities, and help with collaboration in bringing liturgy, formation, outreach and action into a common mission for the church.
4. Need links to diocesan and national structures for resources and training, and to connect with other structures of opportunity.
5. Practice what we preach—live as we mean to.
6. There is a danger of isolation for the few who work toward social justice: look for common ground and build capacity.

Assessment questions for your parish:

1. Where does the social mission fit in the life of your parish? Is it an integral part of your community of faith or the work of a few?
2. Do your liturgies include prayers for justice and peace, for the poor and the vulnerable, in the context of the parish's mission?
3. How often have you noted "justice," "mercy," "fidelity" and "truth" in homilies or in prayer?
4. Is Catholic social teaching being taught in your parish schools, CCD and RCIA? Is it noted in the bulletin?
5. How does your parish encourage parishioners to provide leadership in unions, business and professional associations, community groups and political organizations?
6. What is your parish currently doing to serve local needs or support organizations that serve them in your faith community? In the broader community?
7. How does your parish offer opportunities for members to learn about the moral dimensions of public policy issues affecting the poor and vulnerable?
8. Does your parish have knowledge of community-based economic development and/or community organizing activities nearby?



Social Justice Resources

Catholic Social Teaching Resources:

- www.educationforjustice.org—membership only

Parish Social Ministry Resources:

- Amen, Ann. Jumpstart Your Parish Social Ministry with Parish Care and Concern. Catholic Charities, Diocese of Erie, 1996. (*a direct service model*)
- Catholic Campaign for Human Development. “Sharing the Tradition/Shaping the Future” series. Catholic Campaign for Human Development, NCCB/USCCB, 1991-1996
- Durbin, Mary Ellen, et al. The Empowerment Process: Centering Social Ministry in the Life of the Local Christian Community. Paulist, 1994 (*strong on community organizing*)
- Flynn, Anne E. Dare to Believe, Dare to Act: A Parish Formation Program for Ministry and Service to Others. The Liturgical Press, 1997 (*developed at St. Joseph, Cockeysville, MD, particularly useful to large, highly structured parishes*)
- Heins, Peggy Prevoznik. Salt and Light: A Leadership Training Manual & Facilitator’s Supplement. Catholic Charities, Inc., Diocese of Wilmington, 1995
- Kreitemeyer, Ron. Social Ministry: A Parish Planning Workbook. National Pastoral Life Center/St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1998
- Office of Social Concerns/Parish Relations. “Legislative Education Group: Shaping Our Future” (Parish Contact Edition). Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1999

