



CRS West Regional Bi-annual Partners Gathering
St. Francis Retreat center, San Juan Bautista, CA
May 29-31, 2018

CRS West staff met with 26 partners for two days to pray and reflect on our mission, to deepen their knowledge and commitment to global solidarity and to plan for the coming year. The partners represented 12 key and active dioceses throughout the region (Seattle, Portland, Helena, Spokane, Oakland, Monterey, San Jose, Oakland, Sacramento, Stockton, Reno and Orange). Notable among the groups were the diversity of diocesan offices represented (Life and Justice Coordinators, Hispanic Ministries, Catholic Charities), as well as others (DDs, Rice Bowl Coordinators, Ethical Trade Ambassadors, PAC Animators, seminary partners, parish ambassadors and the California Catholic Conference). There was also a diversity of ethnicities and ages represented. That diversity led to a rich experience of connecting and sharing ideas and plans.

The gathering consisted of a one-day reflection, a presentation and discussion (by Skype) with Bill O’Keefe, presentations on the Parish Ambassador Corps by our DDs in Seattle, updates and resources on Hispanic Outreach and V Encuentro, Share the Journey Campaign, Advocacy including “Go To Advocates” and mapping, CRS response to emergencies by Caroline Brennan, and a fun celebration of our 75th Anniversary.

After Bill’s presentation were asked how we could improve our work. Some key points:

- Liked agency strategy. Aim high, one big goal that brings us together, but also having creative, concrete, hands-on actions folks on ground/in pews can do to follow up.
- Creating better two-way solidarity, importance of Encounter, developing deeper relationships both here and with people overseas, learning going both ways, ideas of creative solutions here.
- “Church Engagement” name implies a limited outreach. We need to go beyond church. What about “US Engagement”.
- Make it easier to locate resources on the web site.
- There is a need for more training/tools/capacity-building for partners
- Some suggestions for a wider outreach:
 - More collaboration with national partners such as Catholic Charities to lift up issues that are both global and local
 - Increase CRS global solidarity resources in church education and formation programs.
 - Continued outreach to Hispanics at all levels and ages which are becoming the core of our Catholic communities.
 - Outreach to other communities (like Arabs in Bay Area), where we can make overseas connections to CRS work.
 - Reaching young Catholics in public settings (90% of Catholic youth are in public schools)



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- Reaching people outside normal church channels, like movements, including secular.

Other comments made by participants during the gathering:

- Suggest that CRS expand the Farm Bill trainings to other issues.
- Appreciate the excellent quality/quantities of videos, emotionally compelling and easy to pass along
- Share the Journey is a good example of how we can educate and engage others.
- Hispanic communities appreciate fun/playful activities like Helping Hands. The HH event at the Region XI Encuentro was very powerful.
- Working with young adults is important as they are energy/innovation for the future generation.

West Region staff reflected on the Value added to CRS from this partnership gathering:

- Gatherings keep the health of our partnerships alive.
- Creates a sense of accountability of our partners to each other and CRS staff
- Moves them on a path of fuller engagement.
- Promotes mutuality which in turn facilitates more responsive relationships to our asks.
- Setting some activities and mutually agreed upon goals for the coming year.

West Region staff reflected on the Value added to partners from this partnership gathering:

- Serves to inspire and energize partners. They learn from each other and feel part of a larger community (like a family).
- Gathering is seen as a gift that makes them feel valued and appreciated. Helps nurture and nourish their commitment.
- They feel like insiders who know what's coming up, what are the new resources, and what strategies work well.
- Coming together in one space affirms and celebrates their efforts.
- Creates a feeling of ownership in CRS that deepens their commitment to CRS work overseas.
- Provides space for people to work together on our issues. For example while reflecting on the 2000 letters signed at the Regional Encuentro, partners (Oakland, Stockton, San Jose and Sacramento) planned an advocacy visit Senator Feinstein's office to deliver the letters together.

