

Catholics for Peace and Justice
Summary of “World Café” General Meeting
May 2, 2009

Fr. Jack Kern set the tone with a short reflection on the Gospel of John 10:11-19 “I am the good shepherd...” remarking that the Greek could be translated “model” shepherd instead of good shepherd. This translation implies that if we follow the model shepherd, we are called to imitate our model, including laying down our lives for others.

At each of the 5 small group discussion tables, people introduced themselves and then stated why they are participating in CPJ. Some mentioned their membership in a parish or a Catholic organization. Many remarked that they do not feel very connected to or convinced by a Church that discriminates against women and does not address the hard social issues of the day. Some said they are learning to be more open and universal in their personal faith life, and they don't feel comfortable with the rigidity of the Church as portrayed by the hierarchy. Others said that there is a need for the flock to gather together to lead the shepherd – meaning the Church – or that they were struggling with a lack of spirituality in the Church.

Individuals' Peace and Justice concerns were surfaced in the groups. Some were looking for ways to focus their activities rather than be always doing MORE. Others spoke of the need to integrate their faith lives, exploring new ways of thinking about God, the world, and relationships. Another person felt a need to stop reading and talking about social justice but rather to put muscles into motion for a worthwhile cause. The need to mount a conscientious, thoughtful and consistent counter-response to our country's war-making, whether Vietnam, Afghanistan, or Iraq, was a passion echoed by several participants. Concerns about ministry to prisoners, and ministry to homeless persons, particularly to homeless veterans, were shared, and net-working around these concerns was embarked.

Mary Krolikowski briefly reviewed the history of CPJ as an organization that grew from lay peoples' concern that the Church speak out against the war in Iraq, and took that mission upon themselves when the hierarchy abdicated the duty. Mary and others briefly described specific CPJ activities that had been important in their faith and advocacy journeys.

The final discussions focused on four areas of interest that had surfaced from participating members' reflections about God's call to them as individuals and as

part of CPJ. The groups were: Poverty, Violence and Homelessness in our midst; Immigration; Peace and Empowerment [as a way of life]; and Environmental Justice/Cosmology. Participants were asked to specify how CPJ could be a support in their personal call to Peace and Justice ministry, and how they could provide leadership to CPJ to move their agenda forward.

As we summarized our discussions the following common ideas about CPJ surfaced:

CPJ currently provides through its newsletter. and should provide, a means of linking, networking and uniting people and groups who are both interested in and passionately pursuing issues of social justice through social and legislative action.

CPJ should provide means to empower people to be peace and work for peace in our communities, our nation and the world through prayer, spirituality, and education which includes reaching out to younger generations as well as a variety of cultures in our community

In our ministries, we all need to stand in solidarity, face to face with those who are struggling.

We need to define what it means to be a part of Catholics for Peace and Justice – as one person put it “shouldn’t everyone who is Catholic be a Catholic for Peace and Justice?”

The following plans surfaced:

Many people volunteered for specific roles, from helping with the newsletter and with the website, to being a contact person to link to other social action organizations, to serving on the CPJ leadership council and becoming a CPJ core team member for Common Ground.

Specifically individuals volunteered to network and create awareness around the issues of the environment/cosmology, immigration, spirituality, veterans and war.

The final outcome of the “World Café’ was that members connected with others around similar concerns. The role of CPJ as an organization providing networking, support and communication about Peace and Justice activities in the community was confirmed. Leaders stepped forward to work on newly surfaced concerns.

On one of the table blog sheets someone wrote “Fighting injustice implies disturbing others and being extended.”