

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FULFILLS GOSPEL MANDATE

BY BETH GRIFFIN

“I always thought as a pastor, I was doing a great job feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, working with the poor and those struggling, but I came to experience that I was only doing part of the Gospel mandate. We were very good about issues of mercy, but issues of justice weren’t really taken as seriously,” says Fr. John Tapp, a priest of the Diocese of St. Petersburg. He describes how community organizing work through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) has been a transformative conversion experience for him and his parish, Holy Family, in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Fr. Tapp says CCHD training helped his parishioners respond to their baptismal call and become people of mission who are not content with the status quo. On housing, school discipline, crime, and drugs, Fr. Tapp says his people “take responsibility, do research, raise up issues, and deal with our elected and appointed officials to make sure these issues take root in our community.”

He says community organizing embodies the liturgical experience. We are sent from Mass to be Christ for others, he says, and if we don’t act on what we’ve celebrated, the liturgy is empty words. “It’s not always comfortable, it’s not always easy, but it’s what we’re called to do,” Fr. Tapp concludes.

And while there will always be opportunities to practice the works of mercy, Fr. Tapp subscribes to a friend’s theory: “If we did more justice, then we would have to do less charity.”

For Msgr. Charles Pope, pastor of Holy Comforter–St. Cyprian in the Archdiocese of Washington, community organizing helps him move beyond pulpit abstractions and offer parishioners a concrete way to live out the Gospel. He says community organizing follows Jesus’ example of forming relationships with people and getting to know what is important to them.

“Jesus formed relationships by calling the disciples,” he says, “and if parishes are going to make a difference in the neighborhood, they have to be a part of what’s going on in their neighbors’ lives, in even simple things like curb repair or speeding traffic. Organizing work helps me fulfill my mission as pastor, priest, and disciple.”



FR. JOHN TAPP

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The Review and Renewal of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) was recently accepted and affirmed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). This development will strengthen CCHD in its efforts to fulfill the Gospel to “bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives, new sight to the blind and set the captives free” (Lk 4:18).

After a year of intense prayerful deliberation and consultation, implementation has already begun with new procedures, criteria clarification, and an increased focus on encouraging Catholic participation. A bishops’ work group secured the assistance of priests, laity, USCCB staff, and leadership of funded groups. The result was a road map to guide CCHD’s future efforts. As a result of the Renewal, a respected theologian, Fr. Daniel Mindling, has been engaged to treat difficult questions regarding grant requests and coalition activity. We welcome Fr. Mindling and look forward to his guidance and insights.

Over the years, CCHD has been blessed by extraordinary leadership on both the local and national levels. This newsletter highlights the tremendous leadership of a few of the dedicated clergy who integrate faith with service to the poor in their parish communities.

CCHD is also thankful for the staunch dedication of Most Rev. Roger Morin, Bishop of Biloxi, who served as the chair of the CCHD subcommittee over the last three years. In November 2010 Bishop Morin’s term ended. His steadfastness and fidelity to the mission were instrumental in directing CCHD through the Review and Renewal and the initial transition. CCHD is immensely grateful for Bishop Morin’s service. The new Subcommittee chair is Bishop Jaime Soto of Sacramento. He is excited about serving and looks forward to ushering CCHD through the renewal process, saying, “God’s people are the Church’s best resource for the mission of New Evangelization. CCHD will continue to invest in them so that they can be the protagonists of the Gospel, announcing the joy and hope of the Lord Jesus to a weary world.”

We are also enormously blessed by the continued support of our friends and donors. I remain grateful for your generosity and partnership in CCHD’s mission.

Blessings to you and yours,



Ralph McCloud
Director, Catholic Campaign for Human Development



What Is CCHD?

Through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Catholics and friends of CCHD across the country help poor and low-income Americans to help themselves and their communities out of poverty.

Since 1970, the Catholic Campaign has contributed over \$280 million to more than 7,800 low-income-led, community-based projects that strengthen families, create jobs, build affordable housing, fight crime, and improve schools and neighborhoods. CCHD requires that projects develop community leadership and participation so that

their solutions to poverty will be long-lasting and effective, and so that CCHD’s investment in people will help break the cycle of poverty. CCHD also educates Catholics about the causes of poverty and seeks to build solidarity between impoverished and affluent persons.



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USCCB COMMUNICATIONS

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“Organizing is about the Word becoming flesh,” says Msgr. Pope. He calls it “bricks and mortar” and says it’s a form of evangelization, too.

“Essentially, evangelization is about drawing people into a transformative, life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ,” he explains. “Jesus said we have to go out and announce the Good News to the poor, not just in an intellectual sense,” but in a way that demonstrates that something is actually changing. Organizing makes a real, concrete difference in people’s lives.

Msgr. Pope says CCHD helped his parish retain a life-saving drug treatment program that was threatened with eviction from a building in Washington’s gentrifying Capitol Hill neighborhood. The parish-sponsored program, which grew out of a prayer group, was able to find and finance a new home because more than 50 religious congregations organized to win the mayor’s support for the facility.

In the Diocese of Laredo, Texas, Fr. Toribio “Toby” Guerrero credits organizing supported by a CCHD grant with bringing people back to St. Peter



MSGR. CHARLES POPE



FR. TORIBIO “TOBY” GUERRERO

the Apostle Church in Laredo, where he is the pastor. “If we’re going to build the Church, we have to build relationships. Through organizing, we go out, gather people, and listen, as Jesus Christ did, ask them questions and have a dialogue,” he says.

St. Peter’s has “grown 1,000 percent” and seen Mass attendance increase from 10 to 150 since Fr. Guerrero began celebrating the liturgy in Spanish. “It shows that the Church cares about the people and wants them and needs them,” he says, adding that St. Peter’s was once the primary

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Meet Mary

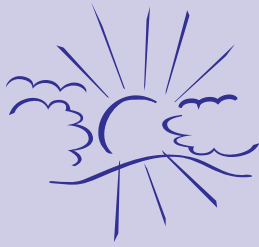
Last fall, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development created an animated video to show how CCHD helps people break out of the cycle of poverty. Watch the video at our website, www.usccb.org/cchd, or on YouTube. She’s gotten over 5,000 views so far!

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English-speaking parish in the diocese.

“Organizing is an evangelizing tool in our parish,” Fr. Guerrero says. “It’s also an instrument to empower people who normally don’t have any power to come alive as part of the parish and become leaders in the parish and the neighborhood.”

For Fr. Tapp, Msgr. Pope, Fr. Guerrero, and so many other Catholics, CCHD’s organizing grants illuminate the path from reading the Scripture to living it. Please visit www.usccb.org/cchd to see these three pastors describe how CCHD helps their people fulfill the Gospel mandate. 



Spotlight on Renewal

The Review and Renewal called for the assistance of a moral theologian to help assess and address the moral and ethical dimensions of CCHD’s work, especially the appropriate application of traditional moral principles of cooperation and collaboration.

Fr. Daniel Mindling, OFM Cap, accepted CCHD’s invitation to serve as its consulting theologian. Fr. Mindling is the academic dean and professor of moral theology at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland. He currently serves as a consultant to the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities and the bishops’ Task Force on Health Care.

Fr. Mindling’s role involves ongoing consultation with CCHD leadership and assistance to the CCHD subcommittee in providing assessment, analysis, advice, and guidance on how best to fulfill CCHD’s mission with clear fidelity to Catholic moral principles and Catholic teaching.

“This service connects greatly with my own interest in the life and justice issues facing the Church,” said Fr. Mindling of his new role with the bishops. “I look forward to working together in this most important ministry.”

Recommended by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, chairman of the USCCB Doctrine Committee, Fr. Mindling served as an advisor to the work group that prepared the report on the Review and Renewal of CCHD. This report, in the words of outgoing CCHD subcommittee chairman Bishop Roger Morin, “reaffirms CCHD’s Catholic foundations and priority for the poor, responds to concerns about CCHD funding policies, and makes 10 commitments to strengthen CCHD as a faithful and effective expression of Catholic teaching and the Gospel.”