The Gritty Reality:

Feel it. Think it. Engage it.

# Introductions

## Why are you here today? (At IFTJ)

## Ask how many work/would be interested in organizing @ the parish level vs. diocesan?

## My background

### M25

### ACVJ

### SMTs

## Goal is not to offer a step by step plan of how to set this up, because handbooks are available and the plan is going to be different for each group. Instead, let’s talk about the theology behind parish organizing and some trouble-shooting and best practices that all (or many!) parish groups will share.

# Basic Theological Foundations for parish involvement:

## Lumen Gentium –Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

### *4.“When the work which the Father gave the Son to do on earth (9) was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church, and thus, all those who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father.*

### *5. The mystery of the holy Church is manifest in its very foundation. The Lord Jesus set it on its course by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Kingdom of God, which, for centuries, had been promised in the Scriptures: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand"(18).*

### *7. In that Body the life of Christ is poured into the believers who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified.(6\*) … As all the members of the human body, though they are many, form one body, so also are the faithful in Christ.(56) Also, in the building up of Christ's Body various members and functions have their part to play. There is only one Spirit who, according to His own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives His different gifts for the welfare of the Church.(57) What has a special place among these gifts is the grace of the apostles to whose authority the Spirit Himself subjected even those who were endowed with charisms.(58) Giving the body unity through Himself and through His power and inner joining of the members, this same Spirit produces and urges love among the believers. From all this it follows that if one member endures anything, all the members co-endure it, and if one member is honored, all the members together rejoice.(59)*

### *8. Christ, the one Mediator, established and continually sustains here on earth His holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as an entity with visible delineation (9\*) through which He communicated truth and grace to all. But, the society structured with hierarchical organs and the Mystical Body of Christ, are not to be considered as two realities, nor are the visible assembly and the spiritual community, nor the earthly Church and the Church enriched with heavenly things; rather they form one complex reality which coalesces from a divine and a human element.(10\*) Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and persecution, so the Church is called to follow the same route that it might communicate the fruits of salvation to men. Christ Jesus, "though He was by nature God . . . emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave",(77) and "being rich, became poor"(78) for our sakes. Thus, the Church, although it needs human resources to carry out its mission, is not set up to seek earthly glory, but to proclaim, even by its own example, humility and self-sacrifice. Christ was sent by the Father "to bring good news to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart",(79) "to seek and to save what was lost".(80) Similarly, the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder. It does all it can to relieve their need and in them it strives to serve Christ.*

### *10. Christ the Lord, High Priest taken from among men,(100) made the new people "a kingdom and priests to God the Father".(101) The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian man they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

### *12. The holy people of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office; it spreads abroad a living witness to Him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the tribute of lips which give praise to His name.*

### *32. If therefore in the Church everyone does not proceed by the same path, nevertheless all are called to sanctity and have received an equal privilege of faith through the justice of God.(194) And if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ.*

## Gaudium et Spes – the Church in the Modern World

### Document opens by saying that Church recognizes joys and sorrows of people of the world: *“The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.”*

### Church responds by looking at “the signs of the times” through the lens of faith.

## We are each called to be Priest, prophet, king

### We are each uniquely gifted.

### We are each uniquely called.

### We are baptized into the “priesthood of all believers.”

## Signs of the times

# Theological Foundation: Going deeper.

## Theology is personal belief system undergirding our actions and relationships.

### Theology is the “Why:” the motivation and the meaning.

### Theology is the work of the clergy AND the entire people of God.

## Linking joys and sorrows to Solidarity begins with creating community in which joys and sorrows are shared

### Marriage, confession are about community

### Common objections to sacraments fail to acknowledge role of community.

#### “Don’t need a piece of paper”

#### “Don’t need intermediary”

### Problems are no longer nameless or faceless Ex.: fellow parishioners face problems, but we don’t rush to judge them because we know them and have worshiped with them. (Gain experience knowing that there’s more than meets the eye; translate to seeing “welfare mom” as person with context and history.)

## From a connected, joyful faith community comes natural outpouring of

### Wisdom

### Experience

### Compassion

# What should parish social action include?

## Education

## Service

## Action

## Advocacy

# Logistical reasons for organizing at parishes

## Have resources

## Are organized.

### Not random collection of strangers but built-in sense of belonging.

### legitimacy

### Geographical network of the diocese

example: Matthew 25

# What are obstacles faced in parish?

## Ask for examples

## List high points:

### Lack of support from Clergy

### Volunteers are burnt out

1. Wilson describes as “pillars and Pew-sitters.”
2. Results in alienation of “pew-sitters” as well as burnout of pillars.

### Ministries are seen as a chore

### Ministries don’t suit volunteers

### Parishioners are not involved in planning process

### There is a lot going on liturgically

### There is a failure to understand the importance of social ministry

### There is a lack of understanding the “seamless garment”

### There is a disconnect between charity and justice.

### Mission/goals/roles are not clearly defined.

### Time and talent sheets are ignored. (Corollary: These can work, Ex: St. Francis develops photography and knitting ministry based on parishioners’ response to survey)

### There is an unfavorable parish climate.

# How do we get around them?

## Establish a WHY

### Our theology and theological anthropology establish our motivation.

### Take advantage of self interest.

### How?

1. Vision statement
2. Mission statement (that dovetails parish’s mission statement)
3. Reflection and discernment of values
4. Education for the parish helps them understand social ministry

### Conflicts arise when there isn’t agreement on the WHY.

## Establish a plan.

### Formation

1. Practical tools
2. Spiritual and theological tools

### Action

1. Goals
2. Objectives
   1. Measurable
   2. Come from worries of community (Wilson)

### Sustainability

### Stakeholders should be involved in the formation of the plan and invested in its success.

## Establish Involvement.

### This is also known as capacity-building.

### Personal invitations

### Recommendations from clergy, staff, team

### Aim for empowerment, self-actualization

1. Leaders should be enablers. “It is enablers who people long to work with. These leaders see themselves as being responsible for helping those they lead to discover, develop, and utilize their unique and varied gifts and talents while at the same time meeting group goals.” (Wilson)
2. Focus on people, not on projects.

### Emphasize self-interest.

1. “What I will get from this?”
2. “What I can contribute from my specific gifts?”
3. Elizabeth O’Connor, quoted by Wilson: “We ask to know the will of God without guessing that His will is written into our very being. We perceive that will when we discern our gifts.”

### Each person can contribute something, Dietrich Bonhoeffer asks us not to exclude the “weak and insignificant.” (Quoted in Wilson)

### Likewise, each person has a style of work and primary motivation

1. Some are motivated by achievement.
2. Some are motivated by affiliations.
3. Some are motivated by power.

### Assess parish climate:

#### what will work best at this parish?

#### What do we need to address for this to work?

### Involve clergy and parish as a whole. Collaborate where possible.

1. Coordinate with the liturgical year.
2. Not competition with other programs and events, but unique, enhancing

## Establish commitment.

### By-laws

### Roles that rotate on schedule, with job descriptions

### Accountability.

# Closing thoughts:

## Be the justice you want to bring to the world, to paraphrase Gandhi.

### “At times it seems we have lost sight of the fact that the good news we proclaim to others must reverberate in the halls of our own committee rooms and council chambers.” (Wilson)

### Use pastoral circle to analyze your group’s own progress.

## Pray