

Social Justice Parish LINK Report for October 2005

October has been a wonderfully busy month for us in the Parish Link effort.

New Locations:

And with the blessing of Vicar Peter De La Bastide, we *finally* started teams in the Eastern Vicariate ... starting up in **Manzanilla, Biche, and Mayaro - Guayaguayare** this month.

We also received a call from Sr Paul Clark asking for the Parish Link program to come down to La Brea and so said so done. Though Sr. Paul is a veritable veteran and a tireless worker for Social Justice, still she said in her opening talk with me "I like the spirituality of the program and we need to re-focus down there. I need you down there." So now we can add **La Brea** to our list of Justice Parish Link locations.

Tunapuna had also called and scheduled a kick off for this month, but postponed till January due to parish event-load ... their Family Day in at the beginning of the Month of November and Fr Reggie will be away from the 8th for 2 weeks, then advent is upon us. So they have re-scheduled for January. I want to thank Anthony Gafoor for the ground work he did for us on this – Thanks Anthony for liasing with Fr. Reggie. You're a real team player.

We have now accomplished our year 1 goal of having at least 2 parishes started up per Vicariate,

Innovations & Presence

For the first time we decided to have booths at local Harvests and Family days and we started these in Curepe and in Rio Claro this month with great success. Our goals were variously to:

- 1) raise awareness of our existence to the broader parish community
- 2) gather data on needs and opinions within the community
- 3) recruit new members

There were banners, balloons and T-shirts at the booths, and there were "give-aways" in exchange for information and written opinions. These "give-aways" were the attractive bookmarkers on the Eucharist and Social Justice, the Commission prayer, and also some brightly colored pens we had printed – paid for by the team members - and which carried 2 messages chosen by the team members ... "Catholic Social Justice Teams" ... and ... "If you want peace, work for Justice".

We also had solidarity visits by Team Leaders to sister Teams.

Big Picture consolidation work

Leadership Team development: I am currently also crafting a leadership team made up of 5 or 6 actual Team Leaders (leaders of existing teams), bringing them together for sharing of experience to date and vision sessions. The synergy and energy that is growing among this leadership team is exciting. Several meetings were held this month for that purpose.

Speaker at the Annual Red Cross Youth Awareness Week ceremonies

In our continuing thrust to link our Parish teams with local community efforts, I spoke this month at the Annual Youth Awareness Week of the Trinidad & Tobago Red Cross celebrations. I formally sent greetings from you and spoke of the work of the CCSJ etc.

Their theme was "Protecting Human Dignity" - so very much in keeping with our church's first position on Social Justice. I made contact with the Chairman of the Mayaro-Rio Claro Regional Corporation, Mr. Ramlochan Panchoo, whom I met at the event and we had an immediate follow-up meeting the following morning. Some of the post-census work we are doing in Rio Claro involves injustice in infrastructure issues and as a collateral outcome, showing the people of the community how to address issues by working with and through the existing government agencies both directly and collaboratively. Mr Panchoo has promised to review with our team representative for infrastructure, all issues identified by the census.

Other good connections were made at that event, and we will be meeting with several of those community leaders. I discussed with Mr. B. Ramlal - School Supervisor 2 of the South-Eastern District the possibility of having our Social Justice team members go into the schools and initiate projects to raise awareness of social justice both in the primary as well as the secondary schools of the area. He is very interested in such a collaboration. Several of our team members are teachers in the various school systems – this will help facilitate action learning projects.

In closing, we can report that the feedback we have received on the Justice video shown in the closing week of the Eucharistic celebrations, was strong and positive. Another good moment for justice work and visibility. October has been a busy and productive month. Greetings and Blessings to you all. We are attaching a picture taken at one of our booths at a family day - enjoy!