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**2015 Day Four - Tuesday, 6/23 - Holy Family Retreat Center, West Hartford to Hartford to St. Vincent de Paul Parish, East Haven**

We again started Day 4 with 7:00 am mass at Holy Family.   Then over to breakfast for nourishment.  This morning John Ryan would be there with his grandson, Tim.  Tim would ride (his mountain bike) and John would do support.  we were glad John was back.  We all missed him.

We lined up for photos and, of course, Joan had us do something fun for the picture.  A good way to ease any tension before the day's ride began.

We would be cycling to Blumenthal's Office then down to East Haven and I don't think it was going to be a downhill ride all the way.

We had to be at Blumenthal's Office by 10:00.  This morning, since Greg was gone, John Ryan would be talking the part on Income and Wealth Inequality but he needed the backup paperwork to assist him.  We had to get it out of John's van but John was with Dave in Johnnie vehicle.

We delayed some before going up to Blumenthal's Office hoping Wendy would get the info and bring it up to John before he had to speak. If she didn't John was confident he could say the right stuff anyway.

We met with Richard Kehoe as we did the past two years.  He was very receptive and welcoming.  We started off the same way, I did the opening and Claire, Tom S, Pam and now John would present their "asks".

Rich had to run out and get a notepad so he could take notes.  He thought we had handout for him on each topic, which we could have given him but did not bring up to the office.

All in all the meeting went well and Wendy got John Ryan the information he needed to do what he had to.  Job well done. Again it was like "speaking to the choir" but the points were made.  After each topic was discussed, I handed Rich Kehoe 14 letters from the past night's letter writing Take Action step of our presentation at St. Bart's.

We left the Office around 12:00 and ate our lunch right in the little courtyard area in front of the doorway to Blumenthal's Office.  We had to munch down as we had a long day's ride ahead of us.  45 miles.  Today I would lead as I did the Cue Sheet.  I actually drove it a few days before our ride started and when asked about hills, I said there were only a couple I could remember.  Nothing that bad.  I would regret those words.

We started off before 1:00 pm.  We had no problem until we hit Maple Ave.  There was construction. When I had driven it before, I was able to get through.  Not today.  Not even bikes.  We had to do an alternate route.  The police officer at the roadblock suggested we go through Goodwin Park.  He told us that was the quickest way to get to Ridge Road.

We tried to communicate with our Support vehicles but could only connect with Dave.  We told him where we would reconnect and asked him to communicate with the other two vehicles. we had some difficulty at this point.  I was getting phone calls while riding on my bike.  Not good.  I was getting frustrated but kept my cool.  I wanted to be more mellow this year. After a few back and forths, we got through to everyone and came up with a plan as to where to meet.  The cyclists would be taking the bike path, gravel and not fun, while the cars had to figure out where we would come out and meet us. There was not good cell phone or walkie talkie reception while in the Park.

Well, we finally all came together.  No damage done.

We continued fine until that first hill.  It was a doozy for sure.  I felt bad because this was our real first long bike ride this year and the first hill was the worst.  Luckily there were a few downhills before we hit the remaining uphills.  they were a lot easier in the car.  When driving the Cue Sheet I really did not notice the steepness of the hills.  That's why having that one slide in our presentation showing the hill makes a lot of sense.  This is part of our mission, our temporary discomfort.  Noting compared to those in poverty that hit their hills everyday and they are not downhill but steep uphills with a lot of bumps and detours.  I always think of our first ride and what Bishop Peter Rosazza said to John Ryan when John asked him if he could make those hills flat.  bishop Peter said, no way.  Just think of the poor with every pedal stroke you take.  That will get you up those hills.  I think we do just that now.

So we followed the Cue sheet well.  We stopped at the Berlin Bike shop for lunch and a few photos.  Claire got her biking gear and bike there so we just had to do a photo with the owners.  We had to keep our eye on the clock as we still had a long ride and we were only 20 miles in.  It was going to be a long day.

We left the Berlin Bike shop and immediately faced Savage Hill. It lived up to it's name.  Most of us struggle but Tim seemed to glide up those hills.  Young legs.

As we got closer to East haven and St. Vincent de Paul parish, the skies began to look more and more threatening. Storms were predicted to hit around 4:00 pm.  We were very close to the church, within 5 miles when it began to thunder. We kept cycling but the Support team was getting more and more worried with each passing minute, especially Joan.

Then it began to thunder with lightening.  That was it. We pulled over on a little side road to get off the bikes but we needed the other two Support vehicles.  Then the skies opened up. We were getting soaked and needed protection so what did we do?  We congregated until this big full maple tree, in a lightening storm. Not the smartest thing we did this day.

We were staying somewhat dry under that tree when the garage door of the house we were facing began to open and a woman yelled for us to come over for shelter. How cool is that?  This family of four were Godsends. We were welcomed  and they even offered us towels until our Support came.  This wasn't easy as Support had no idea where we now were.  After a few calls and watching them pass by on the main road, we got them the right directions and they came to our rescue.

We packed the bikes and were lucky the rain subsided as we did so.  We wished our angels goodbye and drove the remaining few miles to the parish. We were so bummed we couldn't make it the entire way on our bikes.

As soon as we got to the parish we were greeted by an intern who was hired for the summer by Fr. Tom to assist him in the many projects that needed to be done around the parish.  He was very helpful as to instructing us where to put our bikes, where we would be sleeping and setting up the cots we would be sleeping on.

In the meantime, a reporter form the Catholic Transcript arrived and wanted some photos or our arrival.  she wanted photos with our bikes so several of us had to go get out bikes out the church basement, which was locked.  We took a number of photos with Fr. Tom shaking our hands and welcoming us.  One, two, another.  But it was fun and we are hopeful there would be a nice article in the Transcript about our ride.  the reporter only asked general questions and to me did not seem that interested in much details about what we were doing.  Of course that could just be me.

After we got our sleeping quarters squared away, we went back upstairs for our supper.  Fr, Tom had ordered food from a local Italian restaurant.  I don't remember what the dish was called but it was a pasta of some sort and was quite tasty.

We enjoyed our meal and each other's company.  Seemed time was going by quite quickly and it was well after 7:30 before we started our presentation.  There was a few moments where I thought we would not be doing a presentation because no one was there.  Then out of the blue a few folks showed up and we had enough of a group to conduct our presentation.  All in all it went well and after the presentation some questions were asked. Fr. Dominic asked a few questions regarding being Catholic but we answered that our mission is non-denominational as poverty is non-denominational.  We think that was what he was eluding to but could not be quite sure. John Ryan responded to a question pertaining to the National budget and the money spent on war and National Defense and something along the lines about loving your neighbor when one man got up to leave and  responded that we are supposed to love those fanatics that just want to kill us. He was totally in that place where a lot of people are.  I said to him WWJD.  His answer to that was, yeh, what would Jesus Do? John answered that he would love those people or something to that effect.  The man stormed out a bit upset. at which point Fr. Dominic said that he would have to have a talk with the guy tomorrow about loving your neighbor.  So a lesson was learned tonight.

We all headed back to our sleeping area and prepared for our nightly word of the day discussion. First we determined the time we would leave in the morning.  There was a 7:30 am mass which most of said they wanted to attend. We would have breakfast which Fr. Tom would have dropped off and we would leave by 9:30.  Fr. Tom would not be around in the morning as he had business elsewhere first thing.

Here are the Words of the day for Day 4.

Mixed Feelings

Taken Care of

Near miss

Feeling the Love

Sorry - for them hills

Transformed

Listen to Support - Joan

Tolerance

Suffering - bikers and the people

Inspired

Blessed

Frustration

Whisper

Family

Impressed - Tim

Doing God's work

Hills

Done by Lou

I wanted to add a few words about the day. After we spent three days riding relatively easy 30 miles we hit the hills. There seemed to be tension throughout the ride and the day. In riding up the hills with the mandatory whining (by others not just me), the thunder storm, the tree, the miscommunication with the support vehicles, gave us a chance to talk about some of the difficulties and the things that we had to iron out. I think that the events of the day and the discussion after helped us calm the tension that had been building up throughout the week. That helps me to understand that difficulties can arise, but when folks care about each other and desire that relationships continue to grow, we can work them out. Many of us expressed feelings, solutions, fears and needs; we heard each other and responded. Really understanding the others in the group allowed us to grow. JF

Also when in East Haven, I met Maurice.  He had worked for a church for 15 years and then they cut his position.  They did not contribute to unemployment insurance so he was given nothing. He had saved $5,000 and he came to CT to start a business but could not.  He used up his savings and became homeless.  Claire