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**2016 Day Six - Thursday, 6/30 – St. George’s Parish, Guilford to Hartford to St. Bridget Parish, Manchester**

We awoke to a nice morning and prepared for breakfast in St. George’s Gathering space. Sleeping on the cots provided by the parish was a bit hard on the body and it was quite chilly with the air conditioning.

This morning breakfast would be prepared by the women of the parish and it was a delicious breakfast! During breakfast I talked to Fr. Stephen about going on Rt. 79 instead of Rt. 77. He agreed it was a better way to go.

We followed breakfast with Mass at 8:30. We would be heading for Hartford right after Mass. During Mass, Fr. Stephen’s homily was about their Matthew 25 Fund and he mentioned to his congregation that they have to refocus the purpose of that fund.

It should not just be used as a hand out but as a means of a hands up approach. Fr. Stephen was definitely still part of the Brake the Cycle team and our mission. I think we were all inspired by his homily. He called us “Good Martyrs”. That stuck in many of our heads. It was wonderful to hear Father Stephen give a homily. He just gets it! After Mass he led us in prayer as we began our ride to Hartford and home.

The ride to Madison took us 5 miles out of our way, an additional 5 miles added to an already anticipated long day. In the center of Madison we picked up Rt. 79. The shoulder was definitely wider and we were hopeful we would not hit any of the hills we came down on Rt. 77. We were all pleasantly surprised at how nice the route was. As we were getting to the end limits of Madison and before Killingworth, a police car approached me, Johnnie and Eric from the rear. He slowed down and said that we should wait for the rest of our team and when they caught up to stay close and he would escort us safely through the upcoming roundabout. So we slowed down and when the rest of the team caught up that is exactly what he did. We thanked him profusely for his gesture and for considering our safety. We cycled on. Shortly he reappeared and mentioned the construction up ahead. So what did he do? He helped us get through that construction safely. As we continued I saw him parked up ahead on our side of the road. I mentioned to Eric and Johnnie that he must be a cyclist. As we approached him he got out of his vehicle and engaged us. He was a cyclist and I handed him my card and he mentioned he would like to know more about our group and that he would think about joining us in the future especially so after he knew what we were about. His name was Rob Strickland of the Madison Police Department, car #413. We took a couple of photos with him and Pam posted one of them on Facebook. A big Thank You Officer Strickland!!! Nice to see he was concerned for us and we appreciated the escort and felt quite important to boot.

We continued our ride to Hartford. We were supposed to get to UCAN, United Connecticut Action for Neighborhoods on Sargeant St. by 1:30. And we had to eat lunch too.

We picked up Claire as we got into Middletown. She had gotten off the bike earlier. So now we were getting closer to Hartford but it was also getting later in the day and we wondered if we would be able to get to UCAN on time. We debated to forego UCAN but it was decided that we can go there and we would eat our lunch there right after our visit.

As we approached UCAN I received a worried call from Alta Lash of UCAN to be sure we were coming. We were only 5 minutes away. We got there after 1:30 and we did not go right in as we had no one to watch the bikes. So a couple of us decided not to go in but to stay with the bikes. We also had to worry about getting to St. Bridget by 3:00. That would change to 4:00 as we got delayed during our visit with Alta.

She had several people there to talk to us and also educate us and update us on what issues UCAN was involved in and advocating for.

She had a handout for us outlining their latest actions.

During a very difficult budget year for the State of Connecticut UCAN’s Caring Family Coalition worked to protect the interests of low income consumers of healthcare and defeat efforts to cut additional services to the most vulnerable of Connecticut’s residents.

Here are a few of the issues:

**Dually Eligible** (for Medicare and Medicaid)

The Budget passed in 2015 included a cut that would affect 72,000 people. Previously there was a $15 cap on the copay on every prescription. If the copay was more than $15, the state paid the difference. The 2015 budget eliminated the cap. These dually eligible people would then have to pay full copays which could be very expensive especially on a limited budget.

CFC members fought hard to get the cut removed. While the $15 cap could not be maintained, it was only increased to $17.

**HUSKY A**

The 2015 budget passed included a cut in HUSKY A that meant 19,000 parents would lose their Medicaid health insurance. An additional cut was being proposed for 2016 that would affect even more parents but the CFC was successful in getting the legislature to remove this additional cut from the budget.

**Logisticare**

The Department of Social Services is required by federal law to provide transportation services to Medicaid patients. The company contracted until January 2017 is Logisticare. However this company has been doing an awful job and most patients will not even bother to call them for a ride because they have been not been picked up or have been left stranded at a doctor’s office.

CFC has been trying to get a new company contracted or at least a proposal sent out requesting a new provider.

A bill was passed to do so but was vetoed by the governor. However, the legislature overrode the veto.

While at UCAN, Alta had a few folks talk about these and other issues. Their anger and frustration came out quite readily and it was difficult not to get emotional over their desperation. It appears they have gone in front of our state reps and received nothing but lip service. We asked who supports them in fighting for their concerns. We were surprised that even our own state reps were not responsive. John was most surprised that Steven Cassano was among those who seemed to not care. He is “dismissive” of their concerns, according to Alta. We will follow up with him.

We left UCAN a bit frustrated and saddened and said that we have to come to places like this to hear their stories prior to our ride rather than at the end or during. We need to know more upfront. This has to be a priority going forward. A lesson learned.

Outside we gathered for lunch. We had to rush some as we were quite late for St. Bridget which would take us about an hour to get to. We decided we would be there by 4:00 pm.

We lost Kathy and Bob King for the ride to St. Bridget but would see Bob at our final get together at the church.

The ride over to Manchester was uneventful but seemed longer than usual. It was hot and we were tired after a long day. 52 miles of cycling. We finally pulled into the church parking lot. Sue Ryan and Maureen were there to greet us. We were all glad to be “home”. Most started to gather their things from the support vehicles before venturing into the parish house for ice cream and our last word of the day/week.

Tom – Phenomenal; Everything

Claire – Tipping Point

Lauren – Struggle; cycling, eating too much, poverty struggle

Wayne – Humility; keep self humble, citizens of the planet,

Satisfaction; with what we did and learned

Grateful;

Bob S – Opportunities; to help/volunteer, God’s Love

Joan – Perseverance; up those hills, homeless man water bottle, Gatorade and snack

Bob K – Continue

Eric – Calcutta; Fr. Mark, St. Anthony, Prospect, find your own Calcutta, do what you can do…., a fool for Jesus better than a damn fool

Johnnie – Fatigue/Pride (in Lauren); people we met; the newbees,

Rich – Thankful; Wayne riding wing for Claire

John – Saddening/Satisfied; God is with Us!

Pam – We are One!; with God, with the people we meet; those that serve us

Wendy – Hunger pangs; Connections, with all those we met, look into their eyes

Lou – Inflicted – Comfort the inflicted…Inflict the comfortable

Thankful; for Wendy; for John; for Pam; for Claire; for Wayne; for Gary; for Eric; for Johnnie; for your support

Done by Lou with help from John and Pam