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**BTC 2011 Day 1, Manchester to Rocky Hill via Hartford and New Britain.**

We began our 2011 ride just like all the others...we all came to St. B's and gathered.  We loaded the support vehicles with our "stuff".  some say that I brought too much with me.  I look back on that and I believe I did.  I should have thought more about those is poverty who have little to carry with them.  I brought far too much, a sign of having too much perhaps.

It was exciting to see Eric and Tom Sacerdote there for their real first BTC ride.  Little did they know their lives would be changed and their "family" would grow.

Some of us noticed the Channel 3 news van and wondered, "could they be for us?"  We were doubtful.  But guess what, they were.  So nice to have that initial publicity.  Must have been a slow news day.

But at least we got on TV.  Any exposure, even a little, helps our cause.

We finally got going around our designated time.  Father Stephen sent us off with a blessing and we all had thoughts of his dad in our mind and hearts.  Thanks Father.

The ride was like most, dodging the cracks in the road, waving to people we saw, chit chatting with each other, taking in the experience, hoping it wouldn't rain.

One funny thing that happened along the way was when Bob picked up the full can of gasoline in the middle of the road just before we got onto the Charter Oak Bridge.

When we got to Wethersfield Ave I got chills.  I thought of Matthew and would I possibly "see him" this morning.

When we got to **Casa de Francisco** I was happy for our first stop and wondered what to expect.  As we wondered into the room for Teresa to speak to us I hung back to talk to a few of the guys that were sitting there.  I asked them if they were wondering why we were there dressed all funny.  The first man said "no, I'm not".  I said, "really?" and then I told him anyway.  We started a nice conversation and he warmed up and really got into it.  His name was Noel and the other gentleman's name was David.  Both have been out of work for a long time.  Both were a bit angry but both were hopeful.  Both told me they wanted to work and would do just about anything.  A third gentleman, overhearing our conversation, chimed in with his comments about all the money the government is spending overseas to "help" and he asked "what is being done for us here at home?".  Good question. This was the beginning of our 2011 journey and the theme we would hear more frequently.

Teresa Wierbicki provided a wonderful overview of what good was being done with the now **Supportive Housing.**  It really was nice for those living there although the numbers able to receive help had to be reduced from the hundreds served by the Shelter to only the 40 living at the Casa.

We were educated again on the problems of those less fortunate than ourselves and we were educated on the needs and ongoing support required to keep Casa open.

We also learned about the assistance many of the surrounding churches provide and, of course, Carol Rizzo's meatball grinders!

We moved on to **Billings Forge Community Works** and met with Rita Decker-Parry.  We were given the tour as Rita explained the good they are providing for those folks in Frog Hollow which we understand is the second poorest community in the United States after Brownsville Texas.  We saw the Farmers Market which gives folks a means of selling their products and builds community.

**The Farmers’ Market at Billings Forge** was created in 2007 as a seasonal weekly market providing the residents of Billings Forge and the surrounding Frog Hollow neighborhood with access to fresh, local foods. The Farmers' Market creates a diverse meeting space to draw energy into Frog Hollow, particularly by engaging nearby capitol-area workers.

We ate lunch in the Cafe/Kitchen. The Kitchen brings together employment, education, access to healthy eating options, and a connection to the environment using hands-on training, community interactions, and a shared love for food.
We saw where the residents lived.

Today, approximately 270 residents live within the 98 units of mixed-income, affordable housing housed within the Billings Forge complex.

Check out their website for more information. http://www.billingsforgeworks.org/

While at Billings Forge it began to rain, actually it began to pour.

We began our ride to New Britain.

When we did arrive at **Representative Chris Murphy's office**, we were soaked to the skin, dripping wet.  Yet, we were invited in.

We met with Lee Reynolds, Outreach Director, and Megan Forgione, Staff Assistant.  Both were attentive to our concerns and needs.

It was cold and chilly in their office since we were so wet.  We were invited into their conference room which had some light colored brown chairs and sofas.  We were concerned we would ruin them but we told not to worry.

Well during the discussion which was really a good conversation, I noticed where I had my arms on the arms of the chair I was sitting in began to turn a dark brown from the wet.  I immediately got up and noticed the biggest wet spot on the seat of the chair.  I got up and stood behind the chair but continued to drip, drip drip all while our conversation continued.

We exchanged good comments and both Megan and Lee seemed genuinely interested and seemed to be sincere in that they would pass on to Chris Murphy our concerns.  They even encouraged further get togethers on a regular basis.  Sort of wanting to be accountable?  We hope that is true.

I think we left believing this was one of our best political visits, especially since Chris Murphy will be running for Senator.

We left New Britain and it was pouring.  Yet we continued to ride.  We were uncomfortable.  Those in poverty can't get out of the rain and deal with the uncomfort of poverty everyday.  So we road on.

I was reminded of what Lee Reynolds said in our meeting.  She said she mentioned to Megan wondering if we would come because of the rain.  She added that she was sure we would be there because of our mission.  And we were.

We arrived at **St. James** and began the process of showers and unpacking for the night.  Tom Sacerdote was a blessing since he arranged all of the logistics with Carol Rizzo.  All went well.

We gathered  for our pasta dinner and all those desserts.  I connected with my Aetna friend Nancy and after dinner we presented to about 16 folks.

Presentation went well and we proceeded back to the church and the upper rooms where we would spend the night together on our air mattresses.

All in all the first day was over and quite a success.  Eric and Tom were indoctrinated and hooked.

Peace,

Lou

**BTC 2011 Journal- Day 2 - Rocky Hill to Waterbury**

We all had a pretty good night's sleep.  Jokes were made about some high maintenance couple.

We awoke to breakfast and were greeted by Tom S as he arrived early from his home down the road, where he slept for the night.

One by one we came down, first for coffee, then some food.  We seem to always be eating.  Sometimes I feel guilty we have so much to eat while those we do this ride for do not.

When we left St. James, we were given a send-off by some of the folks that were there last evening as well as a group of kids.  Pretty cool I think.

As we road towards the Berlin Turnpike, this is where we realized Claire's right brake was not working properly and also when Anne had her two flat tires.  I was mistaken yesterday.

After Claire and Anne got their bikes on a support vehicle and left for repairs, the rest of us continued our ride.  We had to be in Waterbury supposedly by 11:00 am.

Well, the ride was a bit longer than expected and we hit some mean hills, especially one in particular where one by one we peeled off and walked.  A few of us made it to the top but it was a real struggle.  10% grade uphill is not easy.  Again, you have to think of those in poverty and the uphill battle they have everyday.  We only struggle for a short time and know we will have a place to rest at night, a roof over our heads and a nice, hot shower.  And, we have support as we ride.  They do not have anywhere near the support we have.

Well we had to make a call and tell Barbara at the **Soup Kitchen** in **Waterbury** that we would be a little late.

We arrived there as they were beginning to whine down.  We did get served lunch and that stirred an interesting discussion with several of the clients there.  Claire and I had a nice conversation with a gentleman named Todd.  He was quite articulate and told us stories about the struggles going on in Waterbury where the unemployment rate is the highest in the state.  He has been out of work for over a year and is now collecting $30 a week unemployment.  That is it!  Think about it...living on just $30 a week and he thinks he might get cut off shortly.  He wants to work and will do anything.  He used to work at the hospital and has some skills but there is nothing available.  He said he has over 200 homeless friends.  He was bitter to a degree but was also positive and smiling.  His friend, John, on the other hand, was really angry and resentful that we were even there.  When Claire asked how Todd felt about his situation, John went off on her angrily asking her what she knew about poverty and why we were there eating their food when he had friends out on the green that hadn't eaten in 2 days like himself.  All Claire and I could do was agree with him and apologize.

This was the first time I felt kind of embarrassed that we were visiting a soup kitchen.  The resentment got to me. Although the women who talked to us about the soup kitchen was glad we were there and glad we were interacting with the clients. So....

I asked Todd what he was going to do for the rest of the afternoon.  He said "look for a job".  He sounded frustrated.  We heard the same theme about why our government cannot help those at home who need help.

We had also met Glenda when we first arrived.  She had been homeless for 3 years but she had a big smile on her face because she had just gotten an apartment and was ready to move in.  All she could say was that she hung in there and stayed positive.  She had worked for Pitney Bows and got sick, lost her job and her place of living and was out on the street.  I cannot imagine being homeless for even one day.

After our visit at the soup kitchen, we went across the street to the **YMCA** and met with Jim O'Rourke, Exec. Director, who gave us a quick summary of the goo they were doing, especially for the youth of Waterbury and the various programs they provided that feed the kids and kept them out of trouble.

He also told us some stories like about the women who came in looking for help and would not make eye contact because she was so embarrassed.  When she was successful and on her feet and could afford things, she never gave.  Now, down on her luck and asking for assistance, she found it difficult.  Could be any one of us.  After all, those in poverty look just like you and me.

Jim also advised us of the union no vote and what he thought it meant to the state and to his operation who already had a funding cut.  He was afraid of further cuts sine the YMCA is non-profit and also because he has a lot of member who are state employees.

Everyone seems to be hurting.

We hung around **Waterbury** for some time.  Has some coffee and took in the environment.  I kept wondering how many of the people I saw on the green were in poverty, hadn't eaten or were out of work.  I am sure there were plenty.

We finally made our way to **Blessed Sacrament** and I went in and met with Rene Raymunt, our host.  They were getting ready for our pasta dinner and then our presentation.  Rene and Linda Hendrickson would take us over to their homes for showers and then we would come back for our meal and presentation.

The three couples all went to Rene's house.  She had two Boston Terriers but they didn't bother any of us.

Joan and I slept on a big blowup mattress that lost air during the night and we would up in the center on top of each other.

There were not a lot of people at the presentation but they interacted with us and were engaging.  I thought the presentation went quite well.  Very successful evening and the meal was excellent.  Again too much food.

We got back to Rene's house, chit chatted for a bit and off to bed.  Day 2 was complete.

Day 3 tomorrow.

Peace,

Lou

**BTC 2011 Journal- Day 3 - Waterbury to Milford**

We all arrived back at Blessed Sacrament around the designated time, those from Linda's house right on the dot.

Doug Hall, Jean Pierre, and Wayne joined us.  Tom Sac left us for a the weekend.

We had all eaten breakfast at the homes we stayed at for the night, so we were pretty much ready to go.  There would be no poverty centers or political stops on this ride today.

I got a chance to ride up front since Wayne was going to bring up the rear.  I enjoyed riding with Johnnie F and Doug.  We got too far out in front and had to stop along the way.  Eric and Anne were right behind us.  We waited along side of the road for the rest of the group to catch up.  In the meantime a women in the house across the street from where we stopped asked if we needed anything.  Johnnie said maybe a restroom.  She said sure and invited all of us in to her home.  How nice to welcome complete strangers into her home.  This is again part of these rides I find so amazing, the hospitality of people.  I am humbled by it.

The rest of the group got here and also were welcomed to use the restroom.  A very nice break although we would be breaking shortly down at Rolando's on Rt. 67.

The ride was smooth and not to difficult.  Downhill as they say.

We all had previously provided Wendy with our Subway orders (nice suggestion Wendy) and the support folks did their thing and got us our lunch. We did not eat it until we actually got to Milford which we did earlier than expected.  I guess the 30 miles went by quicker than we all thought.  Since we were down at the beach where **St. Gabriel's** was, everyone enjoyed the extra time.

We ate our lunch under a shady tree near the beach.  Again we feasted.

As we all gathered on the stone wall near the water's edge and were getting our picture taken by Joan and Wendy, Sue came running over to get into the picture and proceeded to step right on the pile of potato chips Joan was munching on.  It was funnier in person.

We all relaxed until just before 3:00 when the reporter from the Milford Mirror was to greet us.

Br. Larry suggested we bike up the street, wait for the signal and bike in together for the photo shoot.

We did just that.  Some of us were interviewed as was Br. Larry, our contact from St. Gabriel's.

We still had some time before the 4:30 mass and that's when we found out that we would not be doing a presentation that evening.  This was a surprise to all of us.

Bob did get to speak at mass after communion and was excellent.  Fr. Maroney welcomed all of us at mass and we had greeted the parishioners before and after mass.

Right after mass we gathered in the church hall and had a fantastically delicious pasta and meatball dinner.  When the plate of meatballs piled high were brought in we all went "Whoo".  It was great.

We dined with the Social Action folks and Br. Larry.

After dinner we were driven off to the respectful homes were we would all be staying.

I think everyone had a different experience at the place they rested their bodies and heads.

Joan, me, Anne, Pam, and Johnnie when to the same house, Barbara who made the meatballs and pasta.  Would you believe we ate more while chatting on their back porch.  Typical Italian host.

And to top it off, Joan's Italian cousin and a relative of Barbara's are from the same home town in Italy.  Joan got her cousin Teddy on the phone and he and Barbara had a conversation like they were long lost relatives.  A small world indeed.

This was our second home with a dog.  Johnnie, Pam, and Anne slept in an RV parked in the parking lot.

Here maybe some of you others can share your experience that night with those you stayed with.

We all slept well.

The end of Day 3. Peace, Lou

Lou, I just wanted to remind you that this was the morning that I accidentally activated the alarm in the school and alerted the police to arrive at Blessed Sacrament.  Almost arrested.

Good thing Art knew the turn-off command.

Peace.  Bob

Some thoughts from the King's and Ryan's on their accommodations over night.  We stayed with Lauren who is a CCD teacher at St Gabriel's who lived on Shore Drive with her three children.  Lauren took us on a tour of the Milford Harbor and some ice cream before we settled in at her beautiful home for sleep.  In the morning, we had a small breakfast and headed for Mass at St Gabriel's.

**BTC 2011 Journal - Day 4 - Milford to Woodbridge to Southbury**

Definitely will need some assistance with Day 4 Journal Milford to Southbury from the second part of the team.

Those of us who had to ride to Woodbridge for a presentation at **Our Lady of the Assumption** had to get back to St. Gabriel's by 7:30.

I thought I overslept and went out to wake Anne, Pam, and Johnnie in the RV.  Little did I remember that I told them 6:30 and not 5:30.  They were not happy.

We had our breakfast at Barbara's house, eggs, english muffins.  We got to St. Gabe's at 7:30 and were greeted by Br. Larry and Eric and Fr. Maroney.

We hugged and thanked everyone and set off, four of us. me, Johnnie F, Pam, and Anne and Joan and Dave as support.

I was a little apprehensive about the Cue Sheet since it was my first one.  All seemed to go well and the early morning ride was absolutely peaceful and beautiful.  Hardly any cars.  I think I said "Car Back" only three times the entire 15 miles.

We got to Our Lady of the Assumption without incident and waited a bit before Betty McVetty greeted us.  My original contact was Roberta Alvarez but she could not be here this morning.  She was disappointed as was I.  She was so nice over the phone and as a host.

We began setting up and to my surprise I did not have the right cord to connect my computer to the projector.  Panic!  We tried to get someone from the parish to get us a cord.  No luck.  I tried calling John Ryan but all were at mass or doing the St. Gabe's presentation.  And, the cell service was spotty at best.

Pam had left, picked up by her husband, off to Kelly and Kurt's daughter's christening.

Luckily Anne's phone had service and I left John Ryan a panic message.  When I called back because time was getting close to our presentation time, I found out that Kathy and Wendy were on their way with the right cord.  Apparently both were packed together after our last presentation.

They dropped it off with 5 minutes to spare.

As I was waiting for them to get there I saw Pam's husband, Chris, out in the parking lot.  I was worried that something was wrong with Pam.  she had lost her wallet and returned to look for it in the van.  They had gotten all the way to Wallingford and had to turn around.  Her wallet was right where she put it down in the van.

I was struggling to get the presentation to work.  I hooked up the cord okay but when I pressed the buttons to get the presentation from my computer to the screen my computer went black.  Nothing.  I was going to have people gather around the computer screen if necessary if we could not get the projection on the big screen.  Now I was in trouble.  I started pressing buttons like crazy.  I guess the Holy Spirit was with me.  Somehow the screen filled with the presentation.  I was elated.

We presented to about 25 folks but a lot were Social Justice committee folks.  but they were engaged and we interacted well.  One lady was angry because she was touting this presentation to her Social Justice friends who go out to breakfast together every Sunday.  She expected them to be here at the presentation.  They chose breakfast out.

But I believe the presentation went well.  When we did the slide about What does it mean to be in Poverty? a little old Italian woman said she could answer that.  Anne prompted her to do so.  She shared how it was growing up poor.  Like I said, good engagement with our audience.

I was very pleased this morning.

After the presentation Johnnie and I said goodbye to Anne.  Big hugs.

Then Johnnie and I started off to **Southbury** with Dave and Joan as our support.  We rode for about 5 more miles and we all stopped for lunch at Dunkin Donuts. We spent a lot of time just talking Social Justice there.  We were making great time and did not want to get to Southbury too early.  We were wondering how all was working out back at St. Gabriel's and the two after mass presentations.

John Ryan and I spoke and we decided that Johnnie and I would wait for them in Southbury before going to Sacred Heart.  Apparently Eric and Wayne were going to ride the entire way and Claire, Bob, Jean Pierre were going to ride from Rolando's.

When Johnnie and I got to Southbury we road on Poverty Road, then we went for Ice Cream.  Again we talked and rested until we heard from Kathy when Bob et al would be on Main Street.  We gathered at Poverty Road and Main and waited for Eric and Wayne to arrive. The new riders road their bikes on Poverty Road.

We all road into **Sacred Heart** together.

We had a wonderful greeting of quite a number of people.  After we settled some and stored our bikes, we all left with our host families to shower.

Joan and I went to Sue Eskierski's who was not only an avid golfer but also a cyclist.  She had a lovely home, lived by herself with her dog Savannah, and was the nicest host.

We hit it off perfectly.

She also owned a gourmet Pasta shop on Poverty road and supplied the pasta used for this night's supper.

We again feasted.  About 35 folks from Sacred Heart were there.  Fr. Joe and Chuck Dietsch were perfect hosts as expected.

We had another great presentation but this time Eric, Sue Ryan, Jean Pierre presented as they did earlier at St. Gabriel's.  It was special especially Jean Pierre when he talked about "Think about it!; Talk about it!; Take Action!".  He virtually "kicked" poverty right out of Connecticut like kicking a soccer ball.

Sacred Heart is a special place to visit with our connection with Fr. Joe.

We all left in an excellent mode.

Sue took Joan and me to Stop and Shop to get our breakfast for the next morning.  We also got to see her Gourmet Pasta Shop, Villarina's and had some Gelato and some Italian chocolate.  I was in heaven.  Sue also gave Joan a jar of their best selling pasta sauce.

This was by far our (Joan and me) best night.  We slept wonderfully and Sue could not have been any nicer.  Thanks Fr. Joe!!

We had to rest up as the next day was going to be our longest and maybe toughest.

Lou

**BTC 2011 Journal - Day 5 - Southbury to West Hartford**

We woke around 6:30 and had breakfast with our host, Sue.  We were to be back at sacred heart for coffee/donuts for those who wanted it before the 8:30 mass.  All arrived on time.  Wayne left us last night.  Tom Breen joined us.

Seems to work pretty well with cyclists coming even for just a couple of days.  Thanks so much to support folks that worked out the comings and goings so perfectly.

Jeanette supported the day before.  Kathy MacDonald and Mary Nason were there as usual for the time they could be.  I appreciate everyone's participation.  Thank you.

Fr. Joe started mass right on the dot.  We were all so pleased to be in his presence again and listening to his homily. We were reminded of what we had to give up and what Sacred Heart gained for yet another time.

We prayed for Eric's grandmother who passed away the night before.

Fr. Joe's homily hit home and was a bit challenging.  **Justice is easy, Christianity is hard**. We still are digesting that.

So we left for **West Hartford** feeling good, blessed, and in high spirits.  Sacred Heart is a special place for us.  We visited on this ride back in 2004, our first Connecticut tour.

We headed for West Hartford via route 67 and 6 most of the way.  Today I would ride in the back again and found that was going to be a challenge after riding upfront yesterday.  But, I made the most of it with the company I was with, Jean Pierre, John Ryan, Claire, and Pam.  We talked, encouraged, sang and rode those hills together.  "On that Holy Mountain" got us going especially Jean Pierre and Claire.  We had fun, if abusing yourself riding up hill is considered fun.  But, if you think of the poor while doing those hills, you get to the top, one pedal stroke at a time.

We were looking forward to ice cream at Gilly's in Thomaston.  It was out of business.  Bummer!  We were all going to get in the support vehicles instead of biking up the nest big hill which appeared to be a bit dangerous because of the lack of a good shoulder.  We all discussed and it was decided that three of us would attempt riding up the hill.  Johnnie F, Eric, and myself would head for the hill.

Every other BTC ride we did on this road we went down this hill and up the nest gradual hill to **Watertown**.  We were doing it in reverse this year.

The hill was real steep at first and we struggled.  Lots of traffic and even a funeral procession of cars.  But we all got to the top.  The three of us would meet the rest up the road for a pizza lunch.

We rode for a while and came to the green in Terryville across from Immaculate Conception parish.  They opened their door for us to use their rest room.  How nice!  The Holy Spirit was with us.

The pizza was delicious and we all filled ourselves again.  Seems we do eat a lot on these rides.

After lunch we got back on the bikes.  "Riders Up!"

We continued our way to West Hartford.  Johnnie and Eric took to the front while the rest of us sort of spanned out.  The traffic was somewhat of a concern but we all managed fine. Pam almost took out a mailman crossing in front of her as she barreled down a hill.

We got close to **Holy Family Retreat Center** and Johnnie and Eric were patiently waiting for us.  We all road in to Holy Family together although the road was being repaired and was not suited well for a road bike.  Jean Pierre on his mountain bikes was the happiest.

We all got to our rooms showered, a few snacks and then dinner of roast beef and other goodies.  The food was wonderful.  Fr. Stephen biked over from St. Bridget and although a bit sweaty enjoyed the dinner and, of course, his birthday cake, as we celebrated his 46th birthday.

We finished dinner and then got ready for the presentation at **St. Peter Claver's parish**.

The presentation went well again although we did not have a large crowd, approximately 10 to 15 and there were several small children.

We followed the same presentation format with the presenters as we did at Sacred Heart.  Jean Pierre was louder and as good as he was previously.  He quietly got the message across.  Tom Sacredote presented for the first time and was excellent.  He brings another dynamic to the team.

And, as was started down in Milford, when we got to the Social Justice committee part of the presentation, we invited the representative from that parish to say a few words.  So we invited Gigi Frailey to speak as we had Br. Larry in Milford and Chuck Dietsch in Southbury.

After the presentation we went back to Holy Family for some snacks, talk, and a singing of our BTC song, "We Must Not Be Silent".

We discussed the plans for the next day, our Finale, and we decided we would do the shorter ride to get to Bloomfield.

We were all tired and all but Johnnie, Pam and I left for bed.  The three of us continued talking and sharing for a while longer.

The day ended peacefully just like the others.  We are all blessed.

Lou

**BTC 2011 Journal - Day 6 - Finale - West Hartford to Bloomfield**

We all awoke and got ready for 7:00 am mass at Holy Family.  We would hear another inspiring homily by Fr. John Baptist Pesce.  He was as good as ever. Today was the feast day of St. Irenaeus, a perfect saint for our mission of poverty awareness. In Fr. John's homily he emphasized we should all celebrate the dignity of oneself.  His homily could not have been any better for us.  It was like it was planned.

We left so blessed and feeling good.

Thank you Fr. Terry again for your hospitality!

We all went over to the other room for breakfast and we feasted again.  Excellent breakfast food to get us energized for the day's ride.  We also made sandwiches for lunch later.

Charlie joins us this morning.  That was a nice addition for the day.

We gathered, prayed and left with a lot of time to take a nice leisurely ride to **Bloomfield** and **Foodshare**.

We had 11 cyclists this morning.

The ride was only a bit over 10 miles and we were making great progress as the route was quite easy today.

At this rate we would get to Foodshare too early. John Ryan suggested when we got to West Hartford that we hang around town and engage people. It was a great suggestion but no one took him up on it.  We kept pedaling on.

We got to a small green and I decided to call Sarah Santora at Foodshare.  She suggested we arrive around 11:45.  Since it was only 10:30 we had some time to kill.  So, Pam suggested we all discuss the weeklong and what stood out this year for us.  A perfect idea.

Dave Kohl started s off mentioning how he had some kind of conversion this year and now feels he would like to cycle with us next year.  This got us all going.  We began to share ideas and feelings.  It was suggested we go to those committed parishes a week prior to the weeklong and speak at their masses about BTC and the following week.  It was also suggested we have a rally/protest in Hartford for poverty awareness and have many of those in poverty attend.  We discussed having two teams of BTC cyclists especially on the weekend.  Many shared what struck them most about the ride this year.  A few mentioned we should have more of a resulting "Take Action" step.

The whole thing was the highlight of the 6 days in my opinion.

We had to cut the discussion short as we had to get to Foodshare on time.

Once we got there, Sarah and other Foodshare folks enthusiastically welcomed us.  The Catholic Transcript was there to interview and talk to some of us.  They documented our ride.  Also Channel 61 Fox showed up and interviewed me.  However, it never was broadcast on their nightly news.  It reminded me what we have heard before, poverty is not a hot news item.

We were glad and fortunate to have **Representative John Larson** speak at this year's Finale.  He was great and complementary on what we were doing and spoke in depth about the poverty issue of Connecticut and in the US.

I was fortunate to be the MC and introduce the speakers. I first mentioned a bit about BTC, where we rode this year, the hills, the rain, the saddle sores and how people in poverty suffer everyday where we only "suffer" for a few hours.

Fr Stephen first spoke and was excellent as always.  He mentioned St. Irenaeus, Our mission as Christians and that it was our goal to put Foodshare out of business.

After Fr. Stephen and John Larson, the next speaker was a representative from the Governor's office, Deb Heinrich.  She is the non-profit liaison. she to was excellent, thanked us for what we are doing.  She also was grateful for what Foodshare and **CABHN** are doing.

Next were Sarah and Ellen Small Billard from CABHN.  Sarah discussed the good Foodshare is doing for those less fortunate and their advocacy as well.

Ellen discussed CABHN's goal and mentioned their mission.  We are fortunate to have partnered with CABHN going forward.

You should all connect with CABHN and get their news letter to stay informed on upcoming legislation that impacts low income folks.  This is a "Take Action" step.

I ended the Finale by mentioning PEDAL and that we would be back on the roads again next year.

Great Finale!!

Some of us stayed and took part in the Hunger 101 workshop that followed. The experience was very informative as we were able to see how it felt for those in poverty and their everyday struggles to makes ends meet and what means and resources they "had" or didn't have.  We actually walked in their footsteps.

If you get the chance to take this Workshop, "Do it!"

Then a few of us rode back to St. Bridget to complete this year's journey.  We arrived at St. Bridget without incident.

An end  to a great 6 day "weeklong" experience.

Peace,

Lou