

**The Brake the Cycle of Poverty 2012 Ride**

We started our ride on Saturday, June 23 at St. Bridget Parish in Manchester, CT.

We rode this first day after praying together for a safe ride and guidance from the Holy Spirit to say the right words and engage with those we meet along the way.

We had some first time participants with us this year and it was going to be interesting to see how they PEDALed with us.

One of our more frequent cyclists was now unemployed and the ride had a different meaning for him.

Another, our most Social Justice minded, was out with a recent injury.

We were different this year but our mission was the same. We did not know what lay ahead for us this year.

We cycled into Enfield without any incident although one of our SAGs went up a one way street the wrong way. Luckily without incident.

We stopped at Loaves & Fishes in Enfield, right down the street from St. Patrick Parish where the next morning we would present after their 8:00 am mass.

We engaged with the clients there and educated ourselves as to why they found themselves there.

I have to admit the first person I engaged, Lorenzo, a large black man, very articulate, fell under my own perception of what the clients "look like". Was I dead wrong. You see, Lorenzo was a Social Worker there to be with his clients. I learned a lot from Lorenzo and I now kick for being so narrow minded and stereo typing. I am sorry for that but learned another valuable lesson. Do not judge.

Lorenzo was a cool guy and I hope after we talked that he will really do what he said and seek me out to hopefully ride with us in the future.

We all met individuals there with numerous stories to share. Like Franky, who has been unemployed for 2 years but would work tomorrow if he had a job.

Every person we met wants to have the dignity they have lost and support themselves and get out of poverty.

We so often hear those that say they are lazy and do not care. that is utter nonsense and to tell you the truth ticks us all off.

We have to be the voice for those who have no voice. We have to be visible for those no one sees.

We thank Priscilla from Loaves & Fishes for having us there to volunteer and listen.

This was just the beginning.

We later in the day presented at St. Adalbert's parish a stone's throw away from Loaves & Fishes.

Bob King spoke after Communion and invited folks to come to our presentation. Some actually did.

We did our usual and presented to those folks and felt we had made our first venture into our 2012 ride successfully.

We were challenged during our presentation by a gentleman who apparently had never been to a soup kitchen. When asked if he had ever done so and his reply was he had not, he could not say anything more. Priscilla was sitting right next to him and just spoke her head.

We always hope for more people but we have come to expect poverty is not something most people want to hear about. It is a scary topic. But we are not giving up. We will be up at dawn the next day, getting on our bikes and repeating our mission.

Back at Holy Family where we suppered together we shared the day's experience and bonded. Those new riders had been initiated into the fold and were now comfortable with the team. Never expected anything different.

On Sunday morning we awoke early and departed back to Enfield for mass at 8:00 am at St. Patrick's and our presentation after mass.

We arrived in plenty of time but had some technical difficulties setting up the presentation. I panicked as I was supposed to speak at mass and it was now after 8:00.

Luckily Kevin, one of our new riders, who happens to be technically bright, saved the day.

I was able to speak when it was time and all went well.

We had another small group but we again had a good presentation and all there seemed to be moved by what they heard.

We thank Fr. John Weaver for having us at both of his parishes.

We left St. Patrick's and headed for Terryville (40 miles or so) and Fr. Marcin's parishes, St. Casmir and Immaculate Conception.

Again we had no significant events happen during our ride there that I remember anyway.

We arrived at the Lyceum building where we would be sharing a meal with parishioners from both parishes and also conducting our presentation. Fr. Stephen came for supper and stayed for the presentation.

We had a good turn out and all went well. Thank you Fr. Marcin.

Our bellies were full, we spoke our words, we were satisfied as much as we could be. But those in poverty rarely have full bellies. Those in poverty are not satisfied often. That's why we do what we do.

Back at Holy Family we again bonded some more and shared the day's experiences. What a great group!

The next morning, Monday, 6/25, we headed off to Middlebury and St. John of the Cross parish and Fr. Dennis.

We had heard that the weather may not be too good today as there would be threats of violent thunderstorms. But we ventured on. All were more worried of the expected hills we would encounter in Waterbury and Middlebury that the weather.

Along our ride we stopped at Eric's in laws home for lunch. It was great. A nice diversion and his and family greeted us warmly. We all shared a great meal.

Once again, with our bellies full, we were on our bikes getting close to Waterbury. As we rode along and took a break for water, refreshment, a car pulled up and warned us of impending storms. We thanked them, looked at the sky, sunny and bright, and rode on.

shortly, after a few more miles, another car stopped and warned us they had just heard of threatening sever weather within the next 15 minutes. Again, we looked up at the sky, sunny and bright. We rode on.

Then the skies got a bit darker and the wind was kicking up. We were just outside the Waterbury city limits and we pulled up to a traffic light near route 262. A nice woman from the biker (motorcycle) bar yelled out that sever thunderstorms would be happening shortly.

We looked up at the sky. No longer sunny and bright but dark and scary. We finely got the message the Holy Spirit was sending and got off our bikes and under cover. Then the skies opened up and rain and thunder pelted down. Three times we were warned. Luckily we did not deny the Word.

We got the bikes on the Sags and ventured to St. John of the Cross and were warmly greeted by Fr. Dennis and some of his Youth Group. A great welcoming!!

We even had a reporter from the Republican American there to listen and report on what we are about. Nice article in the 6/27 edition.

We showered at the Rectory and moved down to the Parish Hall for supper, (great food), engaged with parishioners, and got ready for our presentation.

We had our best turn out, double all others, thus far.

Thank you Fr. Dennis for getting the word out for our visit.

The next morning we awoke in the Parish Hall. Had some snoring that night but we all slept pretty good in spite of that. We had shared another good evening with each other.

We had to get ready quickly as folks would be in the Parish Hal to prepare for breakfast after we attend the 8:00 am mass.

Mass was beautiful and Fr. Dennis' homily was just perfect.

Breakfast was another satisfying meal which keeps reminding us how fortunate we are as compared to those we advocate for. We eat good when we do this annual ride and we feel guilty often because those less fortunate do not get meals everyday, at least not three like we do. We are so blessed.

There for the Grace of God go I.

We left St. John's Tuesday morning and headed toward Hartford and St. Patrick/St. Anthony.

We did not know what to expect there as our last visit to this parish back in 2005 did not have much attendance. This parish is so social justice oriented we were hoping for a good turnout.

This day the team got separated and we had a slight biking accident. Thankfully no one was seriously injured. We are grateful for that!!

You never know what to expect at the next turn.

When we arrived, Fran Damico was a bit anxious about exactly that. there were at least five Social Justice Committee members there and we would at least present to them. Like preaching to the choir but it is what it is.

We suppered together, set up the presentation with anticipation and waited.

a few more folks came and we started. Funny the way it went. We wound up presenting for our longest presentation of the ride. They interacted with us and asked a good number of questions. We were thrilled.

After are presentation we packed up the bikes on the Sags, encountered a homeless man in the parking lot who was looking for food, gave him a couple of Holy Family sandwiches we had on hand, and headed off for Manchester where we would spend the evening. This would be the only time we were not together this trip.

We all arrived at St. Bridget for a 9:00 departure to House of Bread soup kitchen. this turned out to be a special engagement. We were asked to announce our mission to the clients in the gathering space at the soup kitchen. We explained why we were doing what we were doing, why we were dressed like we were. We were warmly accepted by the clients as they understood our mission and that we could be them.

We had a nice surprise when we entered for lunch. Bishop Rosazza was there handing out napkins and plastic-ware to the clients. We would see him at our finally the next day.

All of the team partook and shared and listened. Another educating experience for us all.

We mounted up and headed for Holy Family where we would later meet with Pat Messina from St. Mary Star of the Sea and share a meal at Holy Family. After the meal they would help transport us over to the parish for the presentation.

We shared a beautiful cold meal lovingly prepared by members of their parish.

My grandson, Noah, came and enjoyed the company of the team, joined us for supper, and took a picture with the team and members from St. Mary's. He wore one of our orange tee shirts to be part of the team. Fun for him to be with gramma and grandpa. Hopefully he will not have to see poverty levels like they exist today in CT, the richest state in the richest country in the world.

After our presentation at St. Mary's we again ventured back to Holy Family Retreat Center for the evening. Again we bonded,

We are so very much grateful to Fr. Terry for accommodating the BTC mission and having us stay at Holy Family. What a host!!! Every year he has been such a wonderful part of our mission.

We woke up to mass with Fr. John Pesce and breakfast after mass. We had lots of time to get ready for the Finale at the Capital.

When it was time to leave Holy Family we all reflected on the week's ride and kind of leisurely rode into Hartford although we went down Farmington Avenue and it was a bit tense but we were visible like we like to be. The bikes are our gimmick, the catch. They draw attention to our cause.

We got to the capital early enough to wonder through the building, rest a bit just before the Finale. We did not expect a lot and that is exactly what happened.

But, the speakers, Claire, Bishop Rosazza, Steve Cassano, John Rossi (representing Congressman John Larson), and Jamey Bell from CT Voices for Children, were all upbeat and wonderful especially because today, right at the same time as our Finale, the Healthcare Reform Act was upheld by the Supreme Court. Healthcare for All can become reality!!!

We are so grateful to all who supported this year's ride. And, I, as a rider, think I speak for all the riders, are so grateful to our support folks. Without them we could not do this ride year after year. God bless each and everyone of you!!!

We will see you again next year. Count on it!! Our mission continues!!!

Lou Terzo