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**Reflections 2017**

**Pam**

*As I continue to reflect on this year's BTC ride so many things come to mind. As usual, the ride changes my life each year. The word that resonates with me is Community.*

*Riding to the church at 5:45 in the morning, I could not wait to be back*

*with my BTC community.*

*As we began to get ready, pray and head into Hartford, it seemed so natural to be with this community once again. I was looking forward to meeting up with the rest of the group and the week ahead.*

*As we helped out and talked with people at the Sparrows Ministry, it was very evident of the communities that existed within the hall.*

*You could see that each little community counted on each other and they were integral to meeting their needs. This was evident in every soup kitchen and shelter we visited.*

*I also saw the sense of community in each of the churches that welcomed us each evening.*

*The hospitality is always overwhelming.*

*I appreciate Father Terry and the community at Holy Family that welcomes us every year. It is wonderful to take part in mass on Sunday night. What a beautiful vibrant mass.*

*We were given a prayer cloth made by members of their community. What a blessing!*

*Waking up early and attending 7:00 a.m. mass with Father John was inspiring. What a great way to start our day and be part of a faithful community.*

*Last but not least, as a community of God, I know we need to find a way to be better advocates for what is right and just for the common good for all people.*

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**Claire**

*First a quote from Richard Rohr. " Love is not really an action you do.  Love is what you are.  Love is a place that already exists within you.  It is a place where you must learn to go. "*

*His quote summed up the week for me.   There were similarities between the riders, support team and those in poverty we met.  There was love there.  It was a place where we were going.*

*In contrast, the politicians and many at the churches seemed to be in a state of inertia.  How many times did we hear that the politicians thought our ideas were important but they felt powerless to do anything about it.  And even in the churches we sometimes heard that parishioners were waiting to see how the mergers worked out.  When I returned home and shared some of the encounters we had, there were expressions of futility, there is nothing I can do about poverty.*

*I guess I learned that if there is love in each of us then we cannot be passive.  The human person deserves to be treated with love!*

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**Maureen**

*My mind keeps going to a chat I had with a pair of guys having breakfast at Sparrow. They told me that living on the street is hard because of sleeping rough. There are places to get a good meal. Food isn't the problem. A roof over your head is the variable. They want to work but it's hard for an ex-con. Plus it's impossibly difficult to get an ID. They are glad to have each other - an unlikely pair - one black, one white, but they knew each other from prison and there was a trust there. It makes things easier when you're homeless but have a friend in the same boat. They dream about one day having a lot of money and helping out other homeless people, one at a time.  They both knew they had made mistakes, and they had both done their time. But the punishment is endless.*

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**Lauren**

*I literally met Jesus.*

*We meet Jesus all the time, in many ways and forms but I just wanted to share my experience today and this week.  Saturday morning I was talking to a guy at Sparrow Mission whose name happened to be Jesús.  We saw him again today when we were riding to the capital.  I shouted out to him and of course he recognized us and was waving and blowing us kisses- saying thank you and blessing us and see you around.*

*It might be a coincidence, but I think it was also a physical sign showing us that He is always around.*

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**Lou**

*As I sit here tonight and begin to reflect on our ride, I try to keep drifting into sleep.  I am so tired.*

*But, I cannot get this feeling from coming to the surface.*

*I have been doing the Brake the Cycle of Poverty mission for 15 years.  I have visited many poverty centers.*

*All those shelters, all those soup kitchens, all those faces of those less fortunate than I.*

*I am so blessed to be here typing this reflection in the comfort of my home knowing I will be showing shortly and tucking myself into a comfortable bed for a good night's sleep. After those hills in Waterbury, I need it.*

*But, the one thing that saddens me more than any other the one thing that really got to me this year and maybe more than any other year was meeting little Jordan in the Greater Waterbury Interfaith Mission soup kitchen.*

*Little Jordan, five years old in his Nike hat and tee shirt, just standing there shyly looking into my eyes.  I melted.*

*I had to go over and meet this little boy.*

*I stuck out  my hand to shake and pretended he was holding my hand too tight.  He looked at me kind of wondering. I got down to his level.  Looked him in the eyes to ask him his name.*

*A bit later we engaged again, I shook his hand and again pretended he held it too tight.  He smiled.  We did it again and he smiled more.  I gave him a cookie. Big smile.  White teeth smile. And a hug, his tiny arms rapped around my neck.  It touched my heart.  God.  I asked if he wanted another cookie as he wondered around outside the soup kitchen aimlessly with nothing to do.  He said he did but also whispered, "Can I have one for my Gramma?".  I almost balled right there.*

*We shook hands for the last time.  This time he got it and held on tight as I "tried" to get my hand back.  Huge smile.  Some joy for him in a place I would think with not a lot of joyful times.*

*Then it hit me. How sad that a 5 year old little boy, being taken to a soup kitchen by his Gramma each day for some food and nourishment.  No playing in a yard, just playing in a section of this soup kitchen made up for kids.*

*What real fun is that.  Why does he have to go to this place?  It really upsets me like no other time in 15 years.  I could not stop from crying as I looked at him from afar.  I am tearing up right now.  This is such an unacceptable situation.*

*We have got to do more so no Jordans have to go to soup kitchens!*

*I cried for the first several miles of our ride after leaving the soup kitchen unable to get Jordan's face out of my mind.  This is my week's Word. Jordan.*

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**Joe**

*I know I'm late as I was only on day two but its taken some time to think of what my impressions were on the ride.  I didn't get the chance to interact with any of the church groups so my thoughts were actually centered on the ride.  I was struck by how it was hot and hilly, but what else can you expect riding from the shoreline to West Hartford in late June?  It was difficult enough that poor Katie got sick so I took her home after we reached Holy Family.  We would have loved to share a meal and the mass but she thought she might be sick again and I wanted to get her cool and hydrated.*

*I was back at work and I started paying more attention to people as I traveled around Hartford.  I noticed how many people were walking everywhere.  Not just downtown, but out in the neighborhoods.  I also seemed to be seeing more stories about people walking further to work on Facebook and other social media sites.  Poor people living below or near the poverty line with no money for a car or public transportation.  Mostly these were stories that told of people raising money to buy the person a car or something similar.  Maybe I noticed the stories and people more from being involved in our group.  I don't know.*

*All of this leads to what struck me after the ride.  We were a group of riders going almost 40 miles on our bikes.  It was hot and hilly, but it was also so much better than trying to walk those miles.  I have been thinking more about those among us that have no choice.  The lack of mobility has to be a problem for our state's poorer residents.  Imagine the difference greater mobility might mean to someone who walks three miles to work every day.  Or what it would mean to a student that walks to school and then work?  I can't stop thinking about what that time saved might mean to someone who's commute time could be cut by two thirds!  Three miles by foot probably takes almost an hour in the heat.  It probably takes 15 to 20 minutes.  That's time they would have with their family or to study.  Or even to be able to find a better paying job a little further away, knowing they could get there each day.*

*I think my word is mobility.*