



JustSkills

PRACTICES AND TOOLS FOR PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The programs of JustFaith Ministries help individuals develop a passion and thirst for justice, especially as it relates to the poor and vulnerable of the world. JustFaith programs also help participants express this passion in concrete acts of social ministry in their parish or church and in the community at large.

The JustSkills program of JustFaith Ministries provides participants with an introduction to some of the skills and tools that make the work of social ministry more doable, effective and integrated within the local parish. The purpose of this program is to help parishioners broaden and enhance their parish commitment to justice and social ministry, to a social ministry effort that works both for and with those who are poor.

Albert Nolan, OP, in his article, *The Service of the Poor and Spiritual Growth*, states, “Our attitude to the poor can grow, develop and mature over the years. On the other hand, it can equally get stuck, and we can become fixed in our relationship to the people we try to serve.” An important focus of the JustSkills program is that of helping participants create a supportive community in which attitudes and actions are open and growing - not “stuck”.

Nolan also states, “The first stage of our commitment to the poor is characterized by *compassion*.” JustSkills offers tools, skills and practices that can help participants develop *and sustain* a desire for compassionate action.

These tools, skills and practices are offered over twenty weeks, in four distinct but related parts. Each part builds on the previous one and includes five specific sessions.

Part I

In the first part of the program, participants are introduced to the critical need for the following:

- Participation in a **supportive Community**. To be successful in community, one needs to learn and practice the skills of dialogue, active listening and facilitation.

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- **A commitment to Reflection**, to being transformed by God’s Spirit into disciples of Jesus. This requires an active prayer life and continual reflection on
 - Scripture
 - the social teachings of the Church
 - the words, images and experiences of daily life.

Participants are then introduced to a vision for parish social ministry and a model for a strong, organized Social Ministry Coordinating Team.

Part II

In the second part of the program, participants are introduced to several **tools** for utilizing this social ministry coordinating team and for taking one’s compassionate concern to the parish. These tools include:

- Justice Education and Immersion Experiences
- Legislative Advocacy
- Community Organizing Concepts and Approaches

Part III

In the third part of the program participants are involved in **issue development**. They identify, research and prepare an issue or issues of concern for presentation to the parish or some other group. This is an important part of social ministry work, because one cannot effectively act for and with the poor to bring about change without first understanding the issue(s).

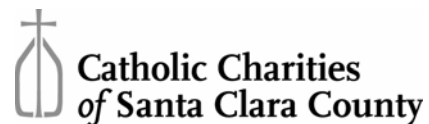
Part IV

Finally, in the fourth part, participants engage in activity related to **working within the parish** to enhance an existing parish social ministry program or to develop and promote a new parish social ministry effort. These activities include:

- Global and Domestic Solidarity Parish Committees
- Working with the Pastor
- Developing an Action Plan

For information in Santa Clara County, contact

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“...faith is not something you possess but rather something you practice. You have to put it into action or it really doesn’t mean anything.”

Jim Wallis, *Faith Works*

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