

Just FAITH

General Overview 2004-05

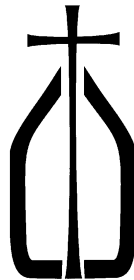
*This document is intended as an overview of concerns for leaders planning or considering JustFaith. Please read this document in its entirety.
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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the JustFaith program. Across the country this experience has proven to be a potent and successful strategy for energizing social ministry. Indeed, most participating parishes choose to repeat the process year after year. The task of getting started and/or facilitation may seem daunting at this point, but this document has been designed to provide assistance in answering many of your initial questions. In addition, the JustFaith staff is readily available by email or phone. Please feel free to contact us at any time. Contact information can be found on the cover page.

Finally, it should be noted that while facilitation involves some preparation and energy, there is tremendous satisfaction associated with this work. It is very energizing to be part of a process that has results, that expands hearts, that empowers love. This is work that is both demanding and very satisfying. Any potential facilitator who would like to speak with experienced facilitators should call or email the Office of JustFaith.

Overview

JustFaith® is a conversion-based process that seeks to provide a context in which participants can grow in their commitment to be about the care of the vulnerable and to become advocates for justice. The program is sponsored by Catholic Charities USA, receives support from Catholic Campaign for Human Development and Catholic Relief Services, and serves to strengthen the growing commitment of parishes and churches to be tools of social transformation.

JustFaith is an extended justice education process that consists of weekly meetings and employs books, videos, lecture, discussion, prayer, retreats and hands-on experiences. The intent is to provide a tapestry of learning opportunities that emphasize and enliven the remarkable justice tradition of the Church. Participants are exposed not only to a substantive and demanding course of study but are also afforded the privilege of becoming community with other participants and sharing a journey of faith and compassion that is both life-giving and challenging.

Engaging in the Church's social mission is without argument one of the most challenging messages of our Gospel tradition. JustFaith is a process that recognizes the complexity of the call to compassion and provides a wide range of compelling resources to communicate this tradition. The difficult call to bring justice to a broken world deserves a preparation that honors the profundity of the task.

Getting Help

One of the first things to do is create a small short-term task force who will work to get the program started. A group of three to five people who are interested in helping to launch the program is often a better option than trying to do the initial work alone. These people do not need to commit to helping with facilitation of the actual program, just to helping prepare for the program. A team approach will bring in more ideas and often more information on the resources available within the parish or diocese. This group can focus on recruitment and share the initial logistical tasks related to program start-up.



Registration

Registering for JustFaith is a simple process. Registration forms can be secured via the Internet (www.justfaith.org) or by contacting the JustFaith Office. The fee for registration in 2004 is \$250 per parish, regardless of the number of people or groups involved. If a group is composed of members from different parishes, there is only one registration fee. Also, the fee is waived or reduced for low-income parishes that are encumbered by the fee.

Please note that any parish, diocese or organization that has registered for JustFaith in the past needs to re-register each year that it intends to use past or current program materials. This will: assure that facilitators receive updated materials (materials are substantially revised every year); link facilitators with other JustFaith groups and the JustFaith Office; and provide the JustFaith Office with an accurate accounting of program use. The registration fee has been kept intentionally low so that parishes can participate year after year. Registration fees help support the program and insure that JustFaith will continue to be available.

Registering for JustFaith also provides a free, one-year membership to Catholic Charities USA's Parish Social Ministry (PSM) Section. The PSM Section provides a host of resources for parishes interested to develop and nurture their social ministry efforts.

Other Program Costs

Cost of Books

The approximate cost of the 11-13 books used each year is \$130 per person. These books are ordered by the facilitator directly from Sowers Books & Videos, a service provided by JustFaith to insure inventory, low prices and a single source for ordering all materials. Typically, the individual participants pay book expenses, although a small number of parishes have elected to subsidize some or all of the cost of the books.

Cost of Videos

The program also employs approximately 14-16 videos each year. The cost of purchasing all of the videos the first year is approximately \$250-300. Since the majority of these videos will be used again in subsequent years, this cost is greatly reduced in the second and third years of doing JustFaith. Also, it should be noted that these videos could be used in other contexts within the parish: RCIA, Confirmation programs, adult education classes, youth group gatherings, etc. Parishes that have participated in JustFaith in past years will attest to the importance of having a social concerns video library for the work of social ministry. Most often, parishes pick up the cost of these videos, but frequently the diocese will elect to purchase one or more sets of the videos and loan them to participating parishes. Video materials can also be purchased through Sowers Books & Videos, a service provided through the JustFaith Office.

Speaker Fees/Stipends

The JustFaith syllabus does suggest an occasional guest speaker as local resources allow. Sometimes it is appropriate to provide a stipend for these speakers. Local custom and parish budgets will suggest what is



possible. Most parishes budget for speaker compensation. In many cases, speakers from agencies and diocesan offices will gladly visit JustFaith groups without the expectation of compensation. Local customs will differ. There may also be expenses related to the hands-on experiences depending on if those involved in these events expect to be compensated. This also varies with location and the particular group involved.

Facilitation

JustFaith does not require professional staff to facilitate the process and presumes that, in most cases, facilitation will be done by a parishioner or a team of parishioners. That is to say, while JustFaith is an intensive and rigorous program, the materials are designed such that they can readily be used by the average English-speaking parishioner/facilitator. (Materials in Spanish are in process; contact the JustFaith Office for more information.) No special skills are needed to facilitate a JustFaith group, just an interest in social ministry and some group facilitation skills. (See below)

Who Is Qualified to be a Facilitator?

Potential facilitators do not need to have theological training or vast social ministry experience. So the first clarification that needs to be made is that facilitators are *not* asked to be the teacher(s); the books, videos, group discussions and occasional guest speakers are the educational tools. The facilitator(s) is the planner and the leader; he/she holds the group together and makes plans and decisions about when to move from one conversation or exercise to the next. The facilitator (or their designee) handles the ordering of books and videos, arranges for speakers, makes contacts with agencies as well as conducts discussions and is attentive to group dynamics. What is most important is that the facilitator be: 1) someone who is really interested in social ministry and justice, and 2) a person who is mature, responsible and able to oversee a conversation amongst a group of people. Certainly, the most ticklish task that the facilitator must negotiate is the week-to-week sensitivity to the needs and energies of a group. Someone without these basic skills and abilities could spell quick and unending problems for a group. Facilitation has been successfully done alone or by a team of two to four.

Communication Between Facilitators and JustFaith Office

JustFaith materials and general communications are distributed via attachments to electronic mail; this obviously presumes that facilitators will have access to a computer and email. In the case where facilitation is being done by a team, materials can be sent to two facilitators per group. Materials sent to facilitators include a syllabus that outlines in detail the prayers, exercises, discussion questions and planning instructions for every JustFaith session, hands-on experiences and retreats. The intent is for facilitators to be able to prepare for each session with a minimal amount of time and effort. These materials are sent in a timely manner so that planning can happen well in advance. In addition, materials include order forms, evaluations, and occasional updates.

These materials are not to be distributed or forwarded except among facilitation team members. JustFaith materials are copyrighted and are intended only for JustFaith facilitators who are working with registered JustFaith groups. JustFaith facilitators are not to share materials with groups outside of their parish.



Publicity and Recruitment

Group Size

The optimum size for a JustFaith group is about twelve to fifteen people. Some groups are smaller and some are a bit larger, but be warned that bigger is not better. Never attempt to do JustFaith with over twenty people. The difficulty is that JustFaith places a heavy emphasis on group conversation and community building; when group size goes over twenty people, the ability of a group either to bond or to include everyone in the conversation begins to break down.

Recruitment

Recruitment often involves the use of personal invitations, bulletin announcements, promotion in the parish newsletter, and small group information sessions after liturgies. Sample bulletin blurbs or full-page inserts are available from the JustFaith Office. Specific guidelines on recruitment are covered in the JustFaith "Getting Started 2004-05" document.

Timing

When possible, it is ideal to start promoting the program in the spring, presuming that the program is to start in the fall. One way to approach the start-up is to do planning in April, recruitment in May, interviews in June, and order materials in July. This spreads out the tasks and allows participants to have the summer to arrange their schedules to accommodate the JustFaith schedule. But this is just one possible scenario. The basic rule of thumb is to advertise and recruit as early as possible so that participants can prepare themselves and facilitators have time to order materials and deal with other logistics.

Program Duration

JustFaith includes thirty weekly sessions and this is considered normative and has been proven to be most effective by hundreds of participating parishes. Facilitators who reduce the length of the program should only do so with very good reason and with the knowledge that it is a lesser option. Remember that JustFaith is primarily a process of conversion and this takes time! Do not shortchange the process or the parish with an unnecessarily abbreviated program. There are plenty of other available social justice education programs that are much shorter if something less demanding is desired.

Scheduling

Regular Meetings

It is highly recommended that JustFaith groups meet every week, except for special holidays. The goals of JustFaith cannot be accomplished by meeting every other week. The recommended length of each session is 2 ½ hours. There is ample material even to expand beyond this timeframe if desired. One possible format involves Tuesday nights with a timetable of 7:00-9:30 p.m. Tuesdays are often less busy than many other nights and the timeframe gets people home before it gets too late. Of course, this is just a suggestion. (A sample 2004-05 calendar is provided in the "Getting Started 2004-05" document.)



Retreats

There is an opening and a closing retreat as part of the planned syllabus. Retreats are very, very important and require everyone's participation. Participants should be alerted well in advance as to when retreats will be held and that it is mandatory that they attend. Retreats can be done in a local parish or diocesan facility or in a participant's home with participants going home to sleep at the end of each evening. This format is usually much easier for parents of younger children and the cost is typically free. If preferred, retreats can be done at a retreat center, but consider the added cost before making plans. (Remember, retreat centers often need to be booked way in advance.) Retreats are typically scheduled from Friday evening to Sunday noon.

Unlike many retreats, JustFaith retreats are not facilitated by a guest retreat director so there is no worry about the cost or difficulty of hiring an outside resource.

Hands-on experiences

Four hands-on experiences are included in the JustFaith Syllabus. Each of these typically involves a Saturday commitment. The main purpose of these experiences is to have face-to-face contact with people on the margins or to provide an "out of classroom" experience. These days should include some kind of social analysis and spiritual reflection on the experience. Program materials specify the concrete steps for this process. This part of the program is the most reliant on local resources, for obvious reasons.

Journey to Justice Retreat Day

One of the hands-on experiences is the Journey to Justice Retreat Day, a process orchestrated through the local and national Catholic Campaign for Human Development Office (CCHD). This experience provides an encounter between JustFaith participants and organized groups of low-income or poor people funded in part by CCHD. Typically, this day should be scheduled sometime between the 10th and 25th week of the program. The JustFaith and CCHD Offices assist with this day by providing program materials with very specific instructions and tools.

Final Note

If you would like more extensive information on how to promote, plan and prepare for JustFaith, email the JustFaith Office (chris@justfaith.org) and request the "Getting Started 2004-05 document, provided free of charge.

The JustFaith Office is intended to be an on-going resource for facilitators and groups planning for or participating in JustFaith. Planners/Facilitators are encouraged to communicate with office staff with special concerns or problems. While JustFaith has an established content and form, there are many ways to adapt the program to reflect some particular interests or concerns. Contact the office for help with adaptation. And, finally, thank you for the willingness to participate in this important, life-changing work.

