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**2015 Day Three - Monday, 6/22 - Holy Family Retreat Center, West Hartford to Hartford to St. Bartholomew Parish, Manchester**

As usual when we stay at Holy Family Retreat Center, we start the next day's ride with 7:00 am mass with Fr. John Baptist.

This day would be no different and his homily about the speck and the log in one's eye would play out later in the day.

I began the day with a bit of reflection.  Yesterday and today we would be without John Ryan.  This was the first time since we started this ministry that BTC would ride without both John and Bob King at the same time.  It was a weird feeling for me.  A bit lonely in a way. I was the "leader" and I found I had to make decisions myself as to when we should leave, where we should be when, when and where to eat lunch, etc. etc. I din't mind but it was different.  Only Joan and I were here from the original BTC.  This was definitely a different ride for me.  Glad to have Pam and Johnnie close by for support.

We left Holy Family early in order to be at the Stop & Shop on New Park Ave.  We again cycled on Park Street. We would meet Kyla Jones there from Hands on Hartford and would be collecting food to restock their Food pantry which just so happened to be located at South Congregational Church where we were for Sparrows Ministry on Saturday.

We got to S&S a little after 9:00 and supplied ourselves with the handout slips we would pass out to people entering the store. We would politely approach patrons from both entrances and explain why we were there.  Some folks blew right by us. Some folks, those you would least expect, stopped and chatted and on the way out gave. We had a lot of interaction and collected two full shopping carts of food.  Actually collected 260 lbs of food. Mondays are tough as most people already did their shopping over the weekend so it was a little slow. But it was good for us. We handed out the Free Meal Cards as well when we could.  we also noticed so many people coming to cash in their empty bottles and cans.  So many!  Some men came buy searched the trash bins for bottles or cans right there in front of us.  Reminded me of my Matthew story over and over.  Jesus slapping me on the side of my head, a constant reminder.  do you know that it takes more than 144,000 empty bottles or cans to generate the $24,250 Federal Government poverty level for a family of four? That's a lot of cans and bottles.

Glad to see Rich Dalidowitz there.  He was a natural when engaging people.  He would be helping with Support today. Getting his feet wet as they say.

We had to watch the clock as we had to be at Senator Murphy's Office by 11:00.  So the cyclists left and Wendy went with Kyla to the Food pantry to drop off the food.  A good day's job.

Not sure but I think we cycled again on Park Street to get to Murphy's Office.

Last night we planned who would speak when we met with Kenny Curran and what our "Asks" would be.  I would open the discussion.  Claire would speak to Child Nutrition and the Reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act scheduled to expire on September 1.  Also there are two bipartisan bills regarding summer meals for children currently in the process of being introduced: the *Summer Meals Act of 2015* and the *Stop Child Summer Hunger Act of 2015*. The first targets low-income children during the summer, and the second would provide low-income families the opportunity to have an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card to help them purchase food.  These two acts have the potential to dramatically reduce hunger during the summer vacation. Tom Sacerdote would speak to the Minimum Wage and would highlight the Raise the Wage Act bringing the Federal Minimum wage to $12.00 and the Fight for 15 which considers raising it to $15.00.  Greg would speak to Income and wealth Inequality. And, Pam would speak to the Veterans Issues especially regarding Vietnam Vets.

When the time came, our session with Kenny was smoothly orchestrated. He took notes and we hope he gets back to us on a couple of items.

Our next stop was going to ImmaCare, formerly Immaculate Conception, shelter and Transitional Housing to meet with Teresa Wierbicki.  We again cycled through Park Street as ImmaCare was close to South park Inn, close to South Congregational Church.

We had a educating experience there.  Learned that the state is now relying on poverty centers to work together to solve the homeless and poverty conditions in the state.  All shelters had to rely on the 211 system to get the homeless a place to stay.  Hard to do and do effectively.  Teresa mentioned they had permanent Housing for those who qualified. But if they get

a higher paying job it could disqualify them from this permanent Housing.  So, how is it permanent?  Good question.  No answer.

So now we headed to Columbus House on Vine Street.  Went the way of Park Street again. Got there and met with Kathy Rogers who is the coordinator of affairs there.  This Columbus House is an affiliate of the larger Columbus House complex in New Haven. This is 75 Supportive Housing units in 10 buildings on Vine Street.  They are doing a great job of making the neighborhood more presentable. The owner, Emily Wolfe, of this facility has an apartment right among the lower income folks living there.  She is the only Caucasian but proud to be part of the goings on. They have big plans to continue to make the area even better with a park like piece of land across the street from the complex that they intend to use as a playground for kids and a regular family area for picnic and neighborhood social gatherings.  Quite an undertaking to beautify this part of Hartford. We were all impressed and we all commented on Kathy's enthusiasm for the project and her work ethic.  She was a former alcoholic and rehabilitated herself and is now giving back 10-fold.  Awesome!

We now headed off to Manchester to St. Bartholomew parish and Fr. Stephen.  This would be Fr. Stephen's last real event before departing to St. George parish in Guilford where he was reassigned.  His last day at St. Bridget and St. Bart's is June 30. guess where BTC will be going on their 2016 bike trip?

We arrived with some time to spare.  The Knight of Columbus prepared our meal for the evening and were great hosts.

We didn't get many other attendees but we it still seemed like a packed house.  We started the presentation right at 7:00 and it went smoothly.  Pam asked Matt to explain why he participated as part of the Participation piece of PEDAL.

Matt works as a Social Worker and was able to reflect on his job versus doing the bike ride.  How he saw his work from within the "trenches". His eyes have been opened to see his role with a new perspective. He has been changed as has Gary and Greg.

We were glad John Ryan and his grandson came and we would see them at Holy Family in the morning.  they would both be with us, Tim cycling and John doing Support.

After the presentation we thanked Fr. Stephen and the Knights and left for Holy Family, bikes packed on our Support Vehicles. During dinner, Pam discussed the possibility of BTC doing a presentation for the Knights at a future date.  Seems like this is going to happen.

Got to Holy Family, all showered, and we met in the meeting room again to discuss the Word of the Day.

Here they are:

Ignorance (2)- no Clue

Passion - as in Kathy Rodgers

Wow!

Dedication - Give of themselves - again Kathy Rodgers

Substance abuse

Speck

Stop & Shop

Contrast - Park Street vs Downtown West Hartford

Generosity of Spirit - again Kathy Rodgers

Rules

Done by Lou