

Reflections on Social Justice in Daily Life – Epiphany 2008

Fr. Ted Cassidy, SM

On this past weekend of the Epiphany here at Cape May Point, Bro Charlie Johnson led 28 college students through a process to discover how to make decisions. The students were led by Charlie through his humor and insight to see where God's glory is present from making sound decisions. The feast of the Epiphany yearns to tell us that God's glory can be in all the decisions we will make during the coming year. The retreat process of discovering the glory is the process I find myself experiencing in the ever-ongoing decisions having to be made in the work of justice.

I attended a barbeque last summer at the home of Deacon Liam O'Clisham with three African Americans and three other Caucasians. Two preteen grandchildren of the African-American Deacon were also present. We feasted on shrimp, clams, claw crabs, various salads, drinks and key lime pie.

The group that met is a clergy subcommittee of the Racial Justice Committee of the Camden Diocese. We are a subcommittee of the Racial Justice Committee of the Diocese. With the strong support of the Bishop, we have been together for about six years, trying to help conscientize the people of the Camden Diocese on racism. We began by giving workshops based on my book on racism in all of the deaneries of the diocese. Our next big step was having Fr. Clarence Williams train a core group of facilitators here at the Marianist Family Retreat Center who could give his workshop to leaders of the diocese. Over 100 of the priests, many deacons, teachers in the Catholic schools, catechists and high school students have participated in these workshops. A very special workshop was held for about 30 high school students of the Multicultural Club of Camden Catholic High School. Their interest, enthusiasm and desire in turn to give the workshop to all the students of their school made this workshop the best experience for us.

It is fun to be with our clergy committee that attended the barbeque last summer and the full Racial Justice Committee. We have been through many meetings and social events—many decisions. We have become friends.

Here at the Marianist Family Retreat Center the African American community has made itself a home. African Americans fill the house for the African Family Retreat and frequently come here for other meetings.

Racism is rampant in many parts of the world. It has deeply infested itself as a negative part of cultures. To root out this ingrained system that has dominated for thousands of years I know is way beyond our small efforts.

However I experience a little bit of the glory the Epiphany celebrates in our efforts here. The process we go through is like the retreat the college students had. We have come to the point where the glory of God is shining through.