

## An idea for rebates: Donate checks to local social justice organizations

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Micah 6:8: "What does the Lord require of you but to act justly and love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God?"

The Old Testament Bible verse describes the call to those who participate in JustFaith, a Catholic social teaching study group. A local JustFaith community spent 30 weeks following the program and is now calling on others to donate part or all of their federal tax rebates to local social justice organizations.

At Holy Infant Catholic Church in southwestern Durham, the parish's JustFaith community met for study and prayer as well as going out to meet people for which social justice is imperative. At the end of the community's sessions this spring, an idea arose: Why not act faithfully with those soon-to-arrive tax rebates? The group shared their idea to their parish and its priest, the Rev. Mike McCue. They hope people will consider donating to local organizations like the Durham Nativity School, Holy Infant Peace and Justice Fund, Durham Habitat for Humanity and TROSA -- Triangle Residential Option for Substance Abuse -- as well as national groups like the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and the national Catholic social justice lobby.

During the JustFaith sessions, the group visited migrant farm workers in Winston-Salem, Catholic Worker houses in Raleigh and Garner, TROSA and African refugees who came to the U.S. through Lutheran Services. During each visit, group members shared a meal or



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JustFaith members at Holy Infant Catholic Church in Durham are challenging people to donate all or part of their tax rebates to local social justice organizations. Members of JustFaith are (from left) the Rev. Mike McCue, Mary Anne Steinis, Lynn Sale, Camila Irwin, Matthew Irwin, Lea Chiquito, Bobi Lee Gallaher and Vita L. Jones.



talked with the people involved. Members of Holy Infant also built a Durham Habitat house.

"I see it as just walking humbly with God," said JustFaith group member Bobi Gallagher. "Jesus is in each of the people we've met."

The study sessions were about both walking with others as well as learning, said Camila Irwin. "A big part of the meetings was learning to live simply. It challenged me personally to consider how I eat and why I eat and who it affects," she said. Irwin now wants to buy local food and fair trade goods. She also learned about the importance of empowerment, and that the people they met are their equals. "It's about more than just coming in and saying, 'We're going to fix this for you.' People are building up their own communities."

Irwin said the JustFaith community was important in that they hold each other accountable. While the weekly program sessions have ended, Holy Infant's JustFaith community will continue to meet monthly. It has impacted each member spiritually.

"It's strengthened our faith. We often say Catholic social teaching is one of the best kept secrets," said Mary Anne Steinis, wearing buttons that said "Ask Me What I'm Doing with my Tax Rebate" and "Social Justice is Not Just for Rock Stars." "One thing that unites us in our faith and responsibility as Catholic Christians is to follow what Jesus taught and the Catholic Church is teaching." Reconciliation -- confession -- is an opportunity to consider how they are responsible socially for the world, she said. If she's not feeding her brother, it's a sin of omission, she explained.

"We need to take responsibility for our social sins," said Matthew Irwin. "We do these things not because we hope you will become Catholic, but because we are Catholic." He said JustFaith has opened his heart to see Christ outside the walls of the church. He said that the group understands that the tax rebates are not disposable income for everyone, but encourages people to give sacrificially.

Steinis hopes for a mass consciousness raising and that people will see a need and meet it.

The Most Rev. Michael Burbidge, bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Raleigh, said he commends the men and women involved in the JustFaith ministry at Holy Infant.

"JustFaith allows individuals to connect with those less fortunate in a meaningful way by understanding the many challenges by which they are faced," Burbidge said Wednesday. "The proposal of JustFaith to donate a portion of one's tax rebate and stimulus check to an organization that addresses the needs of the poor and disadvantaged is an especially fitting way to demonstrate Catholic social teaching at work in the life of the great community."

Lynn Sale said that she now lives much more consciously and intentionally and is making an

effort to live green as well. "I want to put these principles into action in my life," she said.

Some members of the group have even considered changing careers. Vita Jones said the effect of JustFaith has been taking the phrase "Live Simply that Others May Simply Live" and making it a truth, not just a cliché.

*For more information about JustFaith, visit [www.justfaith.org](http://www.justfaith.org).*

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