Grupo de Solidaridad brings a community together

Laura Nino-Berry

Every week, Fr. Jon Pedigo, the director of advocacy and community engagement at Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, hosts a *misa de solidaridad*, a traditional mass with a unique twist. In this weekly *misa*, Fr. Pedigo provides leadership training, community development and spiritual support to parishioners in an effort to create a safe space for conversations on social injustices within the San Jose community.

Thirty Catholic parishioners make up Grupo de Solidaridad, with each member coming from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The group was created and devoted to what Pope Francis calls *encuentro*, a spiritual term which refers to “meeting others different from ourselves and attempting to deeply understand their point of view.” Members include educators, janitors, gardeners, lawyers, single parents, students and doctors — all of whom speak different languages. One factor that makes Grupo de Solidaridad unique is the lack of interpreters during weekly meetings. Members are therefore strongly encouraged to communicate through, and in spite of, any
existing language barriers. As the group shares the same values for its community, Fr. Pedigo has witnessed this approach help build connections and friendships among group members, with the end goal of creating “deeper solidarity,” said Fr. Pedigo.

Since forming the group three years ago, advocacy efforts have focused on homelessness, poverty and the separation of families in the immigrant community and other vulnerable populations. Last year, when the Marriott workers of San Jose went on strike for better working conditions, Fr. Pedigo invited families and community members to stand in solidarity with the workers, as he held mass along the strike line.

During the 2016 elections, Grupo de Solidaridad and volunteers worked with Catholic churches in the Modesto area by setting up voter registration tables to target the large Latinx population, which tended to under vote in the district. Shortly following the election, Fr. Pedigo hosted Congreso del Pueblo, bringing members of different faith communities together to discuss the commitment to inclusivity, participation and justice to those most susceptible to discrimination. Other activities included hosting public plays in response to relevant issues, participating in marches and actively engaging in “service navigation,” which helps with access to housing and immigration services.

CLINIC applauds Fr. Pedigo and Grupo de Solidaridad for their collaborations and for creating inclusive communities. Email us at lspeasmaker@cliniclegal.org to tell us how your community is promoting integration!

**CLINIC in the News Date:**
Wednesday, June 26, 2019 - 5:00pm

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Embracing the Gospel value of welcoming the stranger, CLINIC promotes the dignity and protects the rights of immigrants in partnership with a dedicated network of Catholic and community legal immigration programs.

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