

Franciscan Solidarity Tables

Rooted in the Tradition of St Francis and St Clare, the Franciscan Solidarity Tables are intended to... move us toward being a community of love in action. In justice and support, we are inspired to set tables of peace and friendship, which nourish action in the public square.

Phase 1: Building Relationships

Rooted in Scripture, Franciscan Solidarity Tables are an invitation to *Come to the Table* and sit with God, to sit with one another.

An FST includes both Franciscans and Franciscan hearted people. So, some FSTs may be ecumenical and interfaith.

The Structure of an FST needs to include:

1. A **facilitator** who will convene each gathering the FST. This role can rotate among members of the group.
2. A **scribe** who will report back to FAN, as to the regular progress of the group.
3. A **spiritual servant** (a Franciscan) of the charism of the group. The spiritual servant will help the group in understanding FAN's eight characteristics of *Franciscan Voice*, and Franciscan spirituality.

Phase 2: Minority & Solidarity

Inspired by Franciscans living the Gospel, the heart of this phase is the ability of everyone to listen, as Francis and Clare did to the lepers of their day, thereby discovering a God who speaks in living parables.

Once relationships are well established, an FST can turn to the core of what it means to be Franciscan, namely the virtues of minority & solidarity. As sisters and brothers, the members of an FST ... discern a group "in the margins" of their local area that can be identified and helped with compassion.

The Director of the program will need to begin implementation of this phase by answering these questions:

- How do we "hold" the group in the margins in prayer/fasting without the group in the margins even knowing it?
- How might we meet/encounter those in the margins?
- **How do members of an FST reach out to others in the sense of equality marked by minority and solidarity?**

Phase 3: Social Outreach

Rooted in Scripture, our call is to the community. In humility, we respond to our Baptismal promises made to God, that day after day we take up the basin and the towel in Jesus' example of servant love.

The Director of the program will need to begin implementation of this phase by answering these questions:

- What will you do to be in solidarity with this identified group in the margins?
- How are the voices of the underserved being lifted up?
- Possible situations/contexts might include:
 - [USCCB's charitable works](#) offer examples (short-term, emergency assistance for individuals)
 - Peacemaking (Gun violence prevention, inter-religious Dialogue)
 - Human Dignity (Immigration/Refugee, Trafficking, fair wages, healthcare)
 - Care for Creation (food security, Right to Water/clean water)
 - Example for food security: Gleaning Network is the traditional Biblical practice of gathering crops that would otherwise be left in the fields to rot, or be plowed under after harvest

Phase 4: Social Justice/Advocacy

Inspired by Franciscans living the Gospel, we chose as sisters and brothers to move into the public square to speak truth to power, to seek justice for the oppressed, for those in the margins. Like Francis & Clare, we become *Fools for Christ*, and to do what is right and just.

This phase is the second step of love in action. With moving the other foot forward, FSTs do not ask *how to help* the poor, but rather, they ask *why people are poor*, why things are the way they are, in the sense of injustice. Here the members of FSTs organize to raise their voices in awareness efforts and for effecting systemic change locally, nationally and internationally. Key to this phase is the FST working closely with FAN and its partners in organized advocacy efforts.

The Director of the program will need to begin implementation of this phase by considering the following:

- As described by the USCCB, there are two distinct, but complementary, ways we can put the Gospel in action in response to God's love: *social justice* (addressing systemic, root causes of problems that affect many people-Phase 3) and *charitable works* (short-term, emergency assistance for individuals-Phase 2).
- For example, if the issue of an FST is Food Security, they may choose in Phase 2 of "Minority & Solidarity" to help start a food bank or glean for those most in need. In Phase 3 of Advocacy, they would work to raise awareness about food deserts and advocate for legislation and economic reform that would bring new life, hope, and better health to people in food desert areas.
- This phase would include:
 - Basic advocacy preparation/education on a given issue/situation
 - Coordinate people to work on policy issues locally, statewide & nationally based on geographic region & issues of concern
 - How do you change a law? Contact a Congressperson?
 - Discuss lifestyle change both personally and communally
 - Develop a strategy for networking with national social justice organizations