



High School Meeting 3: Foundation

1. OPENING PRAYER

2. HISTORY OF BETHLEHEM FARM'S LAND

- a. *Community is about sharing work and finding support in one another, as Dorothy Day says, we are not alone anymore. We don't have to do it by ourselves. Our foundation includes tradition, or the life of communities handed down over time. It is the preservation and passing on of what is essential and enduring, as that which is superficial falls to the wayside over time. It is also recognition and respect for those who have gone before us, for those whose shoulders we stand on, and whose work is our foundation, and for those who made and continually remake who we are today. Bethlehem Farm stands in the tradition of the Catholic Worker Movement through being situated on a former Worker Farm.*
- b. On the property of Bethlehem Farm, the Catholic Worker Movement was carried on in the work of Michael Kirwan who created the "John Fillager and Tyra Dunn Catholic Worker Farm." The purpose of "the Farm" at that time was to offer a chance to DC Catholic Worker residents to start over and try the rural life. Michael passed away from cancer in 1999 and his family slowly transitioned the residents to other locations. Eventually the Farm was gifted to the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston WV for the mission of Bethlehem Farm. Michael Kirwan serves for the Bethlehem Farm Caretakers as an example of a simple yet radical and powerful Christian life.
- c. *Two Articles about Michael Kirwan:*
 - i. I Remember Michael from America Magazine and He Daily Served a Disguised God from National Catholic Reporter
 - ii. Divide the students into two groups and have each group read one of the articles aloud. Have them report back to the group:

1. A short summary
2. A few things that stood out about Michael
3. One way the group might want to emulate Michael

3. CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

- a. Bethlehem Farm is firmly rooted in the Catholic Social Teachings. We try to live and teach them in all we do.
- b. What is it? Catholic Social Teaching is not a document, but a collection of values and principles expressed in many church documents over the years. They relate to questions like: How should my faith inform the way I live today, in this culture, in these times? What does my Catholic faith have to do with my political beliefs, my opinions on social issues, my purchasing?
- c. The reason these teachings are often overlooked or under-taught is that they have not typically been presented in a consolidated, easy-to-digest format. Some theologians have worked to distill the social teachings of the Church into core principles that appear throughout Church documents so that they are easier to understand and apply. We find the following list of principles helpful as we shape our lives and work.
- d. Document: Major Themes from Catholic Social Teaching
 - i. Have the group members each read a teaching aloud and, as a group, come up with an example of each teaching applied to real life.
 - ii. Have students pair up and discuss:
 1. Which principle stood out to you? Why?
 2. Which principle(s) do you already embrace in your life? How?
 3. Which principle(s) do you find challenging?
 4. What is one way you think you might grow in living the Catholic Social Teachings from your trip to Bethlehem Farm?

4. CLOSING PRAYER