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Interfaith prayer seeks more 'green' jobs for poor

Jerry Filteau | Oct. 14, 2009

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Catholic, Jewish and other faith leaders are combining environmental and anti-poverty efforts in a new campaign calling for the creation of sustainable, environmentally green job opportunities for the poor.

A centerpiece of the campaign, launched Oct. 14 with a national media teleconference, is an interfaith prayer to God for poverty relief coupled with care for God?s creation. (This story was updated Oct. 19: **USA shouldn't have 'working poor'** [1]

Fr. Larry Snyder, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA, and Rabbi Steve Gutow, president of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs ? whose organizations both launched major new anti-poverty initiatives in 2007, have been spearheading the new campaign, called "Fighting Poverty with Faith: Good Jobs, Green Jobs." [See: www.fightingpovertywithfaith.com [2]].)

They, along with the Rev. Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, and Sayyid M. Syeed, national director of the Office for Interfaith and Community Alliances of the Islamic Society of North America, co-authored the interfaith prayer.

It says:

?Merciful and compassionate God, Divine Architect, your people and your planet call to you, for both are suffering.

?So many of your children cry out for shelter, food, and meaningful work. Make us partners, we pray, in your work of caring for all in need.

?So much of your creation groans from the effects of our pollution. Make us partners, we pray, in your work of healing the earth. Help us to create jobs that both honor the needs of your planet as well as those holy souls who have no work.

?Please give to those who lead a vision of the day when every person, created in your sacred image, has employment with a living wage. Give to us gathered here the courage to speak for those without voice, the strength to act on our convictions, the discernment to see the world as you want it to be, and the wisdom to respond together as persons of different faiths. In these moments with one another, may we feel your presence and together praise your holy name.

?Amen.?

The prayer is to be offered at events across the country during the Oct. 14-21 Fighting Poverty with Faith mobilization, with the authors reciting it together Oct. 21 at a concluding event in Washington.

Members of 34 national faith organizations have joined the four lead organizations in planning public events

across the country to encourage government officials to fight poverty by ensuring equal opportunities for training and employment for the nation?s most vulnerable while working to usher in a new green economy.

In 2007 Catholic Charities USA, which represents some 1,700 diocesan and other Catholic agencies in the nation?s largest nonprofit charitable network, launched a national campaign to cut poverty in half in America by 2020. The Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community, which is a national coordinating and advisory body for 14 national and 125 local agencies comprising the field of Jewish community relations, launched a similar campaign the same year.

Other national organizations who have jointed them in endorsing the Fighting Poverty with Faith mobilization effort include American Baptist Churches USA; Bread for the World; Center of Concern, a Jesuit-initiated social justice think-tank; the U.S. Episcopal Church; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Evangelicals for Social Action; Hindu American Foundation; National Council of Churches; National Council of Jewish Women; Society of St. Vincent DePaul; Sojourners; Union for Reform Judaism; United Church of Christ?s Justice and Witness Ministries; United Jewish Communities; and the United Methodist Church?s General Board of Church and Society.

Reps. Chris Smith, R-N.J. and Mike Castle, R-Del., were slated to join Snyder and Gutow and Miquela Craytor, executive director of Sustainable South Bronx in the afternoon teleconference Oct. 14 kicking off this year?s anti-poverty mobilization.

[Jerry Filteau is NCR Washington correspondent.]

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Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/blogs/usa-shouldnt-have-working-poor
[2] http://www.fightingpovertywithfaith.com