

GENERAL OVERVIEW

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Catholic
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Development



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The JusticeWalking Vision

Set your hearts first on God's Reign and God's justice and all these other things will be given to you as well.
Matthew 6:33

Imagine what would happen to us and our world if we really tried to live the Gospel!

JusticeWalking (J-Walking) is a small-group conversion process that initiates high school students and adult coordinators into life-affirming relationships to be transformed by the Gospel and the application of Catholic social teaching.



J-Walking is an experiment in gospel living.

What would happen to our lives if we tried to live out the Gospel teachings together?

This prayerful process brings adults and older high school students into a small Christian community in order to practice Gospel-based living. Over the course of twelve weekly or bi-weekly sessions, J-Walkers dialogue, reflect, and experiment with the application of the Gospel and Catholic social teaching to their lives.



J-Walkers build relationships that deepen connections and broaden community.

What would happen to our friendships if we let the Gospels guide us?

Transformation happens through *relationships*. The friendships and relationships that develop during the J-Walking process are the core of the program. J-Walking encourages young people to broaden their circles of awareness and exposes them to the spirit of *engaged compassion*, which we call gospel justice.



J-Walkers are pilgrims in pursuit of a better world.

If we put God's justice first, what and who would we care about? What would we be looking for in life?

The J-Walking process is framed as a pilgrimage, a *spiritual journey* in which J-Walkers:

- look *at* current realities and their life experiences
- look *into* the depths of their own hearts
- look *through* the witness of prophetic people who reveal the potential of life lived with integrity and compassion.

"J-Walking changes your entire perspective on things and takes down the barriers that hold you back so you can move forward into the world to change and be changed."

Sally Wilcox

The JusticeWalking Mission

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of God's favor.
Luke 4: 18-19

Imagine where a journey as pilgrims in search of gospel justice could take us!

J-Walking means...

going against the flow – choosing unconventional paths – crossing social boundaries – entering into “unlikely” relationships – uncovering opportunities to build community – gaining insightful perspectives through personal encounters, reflection, and dialogue.



J-Walkers do not follow the crowd.

True to its name, J-Walking is a counter-cultural and demanding small-group conversion process comprised of seven to twelve people.



J-Walking initiates youth into prophetic living.

J-Walkers commit to seven two-hour sessions. They participate in an opening and a closing retreat, a justice pilgrimage, and a public presentation of the J-Walking journey.



J-Walkers look and listen, read and dialogue, pray and practice.

Reading assignments for J-Walkers are modest (two texts). The context and content of J-Walking focuses on spirituality, dialogue, and building relationships.



J-Walkers are boundary-crossers.

Each J-Walking group develops a relationship with a local social service agency. Every other session takes place at this agency, where J-Walkers spend the first hour visiting with people and the second hour in reflection and dialogue at the agency or at a nearby location. The relationships built at the agency and the dialogue that follows help J-Walkers become aware of and challenge the artificial (yet powerful!) boundaries that divide us from one another.



J-Walkers engage in prophetic dialogue with our world.

The J-Walking process includes a Public Dialogue during which J-Walkers offer creative presentations before an assembly of family members, peers, and parishioners.



J-Walking is inter-generational and co-facilitated.

J-Walking groups include five to ten young adults and two coordinators (ideally one student and one older adult). Since we are all teachers and learners when it comes to walking justly, everyone—young or old—is a J-Walker. Sessions are co-facilitated by younger and older people working together.

Walking a Heart Path into Justice

Come unto me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
Matthew 11: 28-30

**Imagine walking in the footsteps of Jesus today.
Where would we go? Who would we know? How would we grow?**

J-Walkers are moving in a different direction.

This journey will lead young people along different paths, inspire uncommon life choices, offer faith-based perspectives on the events of our time, re-order life priorities, and relocate relationships.

Through prayer and ritual, spiritual reading and spiritual practices, journal-keeping, and deepening spiritual and social awareness, J-Walkers are exposed to:

- *Prayerful dialogue* - the practice of listening with undivided attention
- *Prophetic living* - the call to live justly in a mis-ordered world
- *Relationships across boundaries* – dialogue and relationship-building that helps us become aware of and challenge the artificial boundaries that divide us from one another.
- *Witnesses of justice* - the stories of those who have struggled to live with integrity



Components of the JusticeWalking process

With the support of friends and family, J-Walkers commit to:

- Seven two-hour weekly sessions
- Holding every other meeting (four visits) at a local social service agency
- An opening and closing retreat
- A justice pilgrimage, prayerfully visiting four local sites
- Reading and reflecting together on two books
- Daily prayer and journal reflection
- Four spiritual practices or experiments in lifestyle adjustment
- Conducting a public dialogue with invited guests

*“J-Walking goes far beyond twelve sessions. It is a way of life.
It changes the way you live your life!”*

Allyson Ferry

Integrated Experiences Unique to J-Walking

“Dear young people, please, don’t be observers of life, but get involved. Jesus did not remain an observer, but he immersed himself. Don’t be observers, but immerse yourself in the reality of life, as Jesus did.”

Pope Francis

Imagine the people we would come to know and the realities that would become important if gospel justice were the focus of our living!

J-Walking creates small, mobile communities of disciples willing to walk the holy ground of unfamiliar places and relationships.



Meeting at the Margins

What social boundaries do the Gospels and our faith require us to cross?

Jesus made a regular practice of crossing social boundaries and exposing them for the sinful constructs they are. J-Walkers are invited to follow Jesus by doing what he did, by walking where he walked, and by daring to examine and challenge some of the most prevalent social boundaries in our society.

To this end, J-Walking groups develop a relationship with a local social service agency over the course of the J-Walking process, with every other J-Walking session held at the agency. During the first hour of these sessions, J-Walkers focus on forming relationships, building understanding, and developing an awareness of the life experiences of those with whom they visit. In time, and with the help of dialogue and reflection, these relationships widen the circle of awareness of J-Walkers, and help them to recognize the social constructs that might affect their own lives. The second hour of these Meetings at the Margins includes shorter reflective sessions that take place at the agency or at a nearby location.



“Words and Witness” Prophetic Presentation

What is God asking of us, and who speaks on behalf of loving-justice?

J-Walking is built on dialogue and collaboration. J-Walkers are empowered to speak with a prophetic voice. As part of this journey, J-Walkers work together to create a public event to challenge and inspire others and facilitate a prayerful dialogue with an assembled group of guests. Parents, friends, teachers, and graduates of other JustFaith Ministries programs are typically invited to this two-hour event. J-Walkers testify to their struggle to live the Gospel, share the realities they are investigating, facilitate a faith-sharing dialogue, and challenge participants with steps for practical action.

“J-Walking will help you find peace and hope with yourself and your place in a global world.”

Leah Raidt



Reflecting the Signs of our Times

What are the crises of our times? How does the Gospel speak to these realities?

J-Walkers “pray the news.” Every session begins by opening a newspaper and reflecting on current events through the lens of our faith. J-Walkers also have a J-Walker Journal to guide their prayer and spiritual reading between sessions.



Spiritual Practices

Based on our actions and attitudes, choices and relationships, would anyone know we are following Jesus?

Walking the gospel path detours us from the mainstream. J-Walking offers six counter-cultural challenges to address the gap between what we profess and how we operate in the world. Between sessions, J-Walkers experiment with spiritual practices and reflect on new perspectives they have gained. These challenges can lead to creative tension at home, at school, and at work. Each practice has two aspects: *fasting from*, an activity or attitude and *embracing* an alternative. These spiritual practices are intended to open minds, soften hearts and put J-Walkers on a path to gospel justice that begins at home, in our ways of living and loving.



Shared Prayerful Leadership

J-Walking materials provide prayers, rituals, reflections and symbols for each gathering. Sessions are co-facilitated by coordinators and participants so that each participant shares in the tasks of leading prayer and dialogue.



Justice Pilgrimage

J-Walkers take to the streets in their hometown area to reframe the practice of pilgrimage. Groups visit a variety of sites where they reflect, pray, journal, and share insights on the realities before them. This inner and outer journey helps J-Walkers in the recovery of soul and vision, inviting them to localize the implications of gospel justice.

*“J-Walking is a great way to learn about yourself,
and how your choices really affect other people.
It challenges you to consider the consequences of your actions, directly and indirectly.
You need to be willing and open to change in order to let J-Walking work on you.”*

Sean Sullivan

Resources and Requirements for the Journey

*When he was at table with them, he took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to them.
Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him...*
Luke 24:30-31

The relationships that develop as a result of the J-Walking process provide the context for transformation. The content for each session is communicated through prayer, dialogue, journaling, and the spiritual practices. Ritual, symbol, and journal-keeping are tools J-Walkers use to break open their relationship to the God of life.



Resource-full Reading

Reading and journal-keeping are central to J-Walking. Everyone is expected to read and reflect on two books. They offer challenging perspectives on what it means to be moved by compassion and turned around to gospel justice. Additional resources include the J-Walker Journal, a DVD, and a group text. The companion CD, “Songs for JusticeWalkers” (by Bryan Sirchio), was specifically compiled for J-Walking. The songs are woven into the session outlines.



Small is GREAT!

Forming *small circles of care and prayer* reflects the discipleship model we find in the Gospels. Smaller groups are more conducive to deeper sharing and entering a social service agency with only a handful of people is less invasive. The ideal number for a J-Walking group is seven to twelve people total. The minimum recommended number for a J-Walking group is seven people (including the two coordinators).



Integrating older and younger voices

J-Walking communities *integrate* rather than *isolate* young people. As in any initiation experience, transformation occurs in communities where dialogue is encouraged, integrity is proven through practice, and young and old become companions.



Families, Friends, Supporters, and JustFaith Ministries Graduates

The Public Dialogue provides an opportunity for the family, parish, and school community to share in the process. JustFaith Ministries groups and graduates are encouraged to participate in this dialogue session and act as supporters of the process.

Outline of the J-Walking Journey

*While they were discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them... And he said to them,
"What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?"*
Luke 24: 15-17

College JusticeWalking offers a flexible format that can be scheduled to best fit the needs of your group. The progression of the journey is outlined as follows:

- **Opening Retreat** (overnight)
- **Session One** (two hours)*
- **Session Two** (two hours)
- **Session Three** (two hours)*
- **Justice Pilgrimage** (one six-hour day)
- **Session Four** (two hours)
- **Session Five** (two hours)*
- **Session Six** (two hours)
- **Session Seven** (two hours)*
- **Commissioning Retreat** (seven hours)
- **Public Dialogue** (two hours)

**These meetings take place at a local social service agency.*

*"J-Walking opens your life to the community around you.
It makes you more aware of everyone and everything in this world we share."*

Tyler Hobbs