

Website provides justice resources for educators

Patricia Lefevere | Dec. 27, 2011

Need a lesson plan, a case study, movie guide or prayer service? Perhaps you're feeling challenged by the competing tasks of teaching, ministry, and raising a family, and you're looking for a little assistance. Look no further than the Center of Concern's Education for Justice website (www.educationforjustice.org).

The website's program has 1,000 individual and organizational members who bring approximately 3,500 total users to the center's program database, said its director, Kerry Danner-McDonald. These users tap into the site's materials to educate a quarter to a half a million Catholics, she said.

What they're granted is access to more than 2,300 educational resources from a Catholic social teaching perspective. Users can download Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical on the conditions of labor, *Rerum Novarum*, or a guide to the latest "Harry Potter" film. New resources are posted every two to three weeks, Danner-McDonald said.

Advanced search functions, including a resource finder, allow members to look for particular formats, like PowerPoint and video clips, and to search for specific justice topics.

Subscribers include high school theology teachers, campus and youth ministers, service learning coordinators, peace and justice committees and parish social concerns committees. Religious orders, faith-sharing groups, JustFaith groups, diocesan social action offices and mission effectiveness offices are also members, Danner-McDonald said.

Members live in all 50 states and come from 19 nations on six continents. Selected material is available in Spanish.

Jesuit Fr. James Hug, president of the Center of Concern, attributes the popularity of the Education for Justice program not only to its "high quality, ready-to-use and award-winning educational materials," but also to the fact that the 10-year-old project began at a time when parishes were cutting staff and "everyone was being asked to do more with less," he said. The website has helped the center expand its network of educators and lay ministers and build "an informed faith community," he said. Its staff has also made presentations at National Catholic Educational Association and other regional and national meetings.

To this endeavor Danner-McDonald brings nearly 20 years of experience in organizing and educating on faith-based justice issues. With a master's in systematic and moral theology and a doctorate in ethics and social theory, she's focused her research on quality of life issues, economic justice, feminist theology, and, most recently, on the cognitive aspects of how the faithful bring biblically-based virtues of compassion and justice to bear on everyday life. She also teaches at Georgetown University in Washington and Marymount University in Arlington, Va.

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