



Archdiocese of Indianapolis - Catholic Charities  
Introduction to  
Parish Social Ministry

## XV. Some PSM pitfalls to Avoid

The USCCB document, *Communities of Salt and Light*, lists some important pitfalls to avoid for a PSM Team.

- Do not isolate PSM from the rest of the parish. A pitfall for PSM Team leaders would be to isolate themselves. By treating the parish as a target rather than a community to be served and empowered.
- In working with social ministry, a big danger is “potential partisanship, the temptation to try to use the parish for inappropriate political objectives. We need to make sure our faith shapes our political action, not the other way around. We cannot forget that we pursue the kingdom of God, not some earthly vision or ideological cause.” A good reference to assist a PSM team to be grounded in their faith and political action is **“Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the USCCB.”**
- Avoid divisiveness. It is important to emphasize the common ground among social service and social action, education and advocacy, pro-life and social concerns, economic development and environmental commitment. Members of an effective PSM Team lead with their faith and not their politics.
- A common pitfall is to try to do too much on too many issues. Without clear priorities and an effective plan of action, the PSM can become overwhelmed and burned out. It can also cause confusion within the parish and appear that the PSM Team is not organized.
- It is important to remember that the different ministries within the parish are the parishes, not the PSM Team. It is natural to have some ownership with a ministry, but the job of the PSM Team is to help educate and provide opportunities for the entire parish to engage in.
- “The final and most serious danger is for the parish leaders to act as if the social ministry of the Church was the responsibility of someone else. Every believer is called to serve those in need, to work for justice, and pursue peace. Every parish has the mission to help its members act on their faith in the world.”

PSM serves as Ambassadors of  
Good News – The Common  
Mission of ALL Ministries

**“We need to build local communities of faith where our social teaching is central, not fringe; where social ministry is integral, not optional; where it is the work of every believer, not just the mission of the a few committed people and communities.”**

**(USCCB, Communities of Salt and Light – 1994)**