

JUSTICE & THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH Reflection Sheet

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to bring
good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Luke 4: 18 – 19

Jesus was vitally concerned with what divided society and caused human impoverishment. He challenged many of the norms and social structures that oppressed, alienated or undermined the dignity of people. His ministry to establish the Kingdom of God was certainly concerned with personal conversion but also with liberating people from unjust structures.

We share in the ministry of Jesus because we too have been anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit and are called to be his witnesses. We are all really responsible for each other and must work for social conditions that allow individuals and families to meet their needs and realise their full potential.

**Australian Catholic Bishops Conference,
*And You Shall be My Witnesses, Social Justice
Sunday Statement 2009, p 9.***

The mission of the Church is to proclaim and establish the Kingdom of God begun by Jesus Christ among all peoples. The Church constitutes on earth the seed and beginning of this salvific Kingdom.

***Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic
Church, Strathfield, St Pauls, 2005, n 150.***

A PROCESS FOR REFLECTION

- Take some time quietly by yourself to slowly read the quotes on this sheet. They come from Scripture, the teachings of Popes and Bishops, and the reflections of religious orders. They focus on the theme of mission and justice.
- Notice which quotes attract you and which ones surprise you, challenge you, or leave you cold.
- Stay with one or two quotes that attract you.
- How do these quotes speak to you at this time?
- Try to write down in one or two sentences how you understand the mission of the Church, and the place of justice in it.
- Share your reflections with a small group.
- What additional insights did you gain from other people's reflections? You may wish to adjust your description of the mission of the Church in the light of these insights.
- Post your description of the mission of the Church on a wall and view the 'gallery' of descriptions from the whole group.

The Kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually as people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another...

The Kingdom is the concern of everyone: individuals, society and the world. Working for the Kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God's activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the Kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. In a word, the Kingdom of God is the manifestation and the realisation of God's plan of salvation in all its fullness.

John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, n 15.

'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

Matthew 25: 31 – 36

The Christian religion is, of course, rightly concerned with spiritual values, faith and eternal life, but it does not distance itself from the business of living in this world. The two are inextricably bound together. Salvation begins in this world but does not end here. It is dependent not only on openness to the influence of God's saving power, on personal virtue and devotion, but also on the individual's willingness to contribute, within his or her capacity, to the common good, through the application of ethical principles to the social, economic and political order.

**Australian Catholic Bishops Conference,
Common Wealth for the Common Good,
Collins Dove, North Blackburn, 1992, pp 3-4.**

Do you wish to honour the body of Christ? Do not ignore him when he is naked. Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk only then to neglect him outside where he suffers cold and nakedness. What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices, when he is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying his hunger, and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well.

Saint John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople

Ours is a service of faith and of the radical implications of faith in a world where it is becoming easier to settle for something less than faith and less than justice. We recognise, along with many of our contemporaries, that without faith, without the eye of love, the human world seems to be too evil for God to be good, for a good God to exist. But faith recognises that God is acting, through Christ's love and the power of the Holy Spirit, to destroy the structures of sin which afflict the bodies and hearts of his children. Our Jesuit mission touches something fundamental in the human heart: the desire to find God in a world scarred by sin, and then to live by his Gospel in all its implications. This, the instinct to live fully in God's love and thereby to promote a shared, lasting human good, is what we address by our vocation to serve faith and promote the justice of God's Kingdom. Jesus Christ invites us, and through us the people we serve, to move, in conversion of heart, from solidarity with sin to solidarity with him for humanity, and to promote the Kingdom in all its aspects.

**Society of Jesus, General Congregation 34,
Decree 2, n 11.**

As the objects of God's love, men and women become subjects of charity, they are called to make themselves instruments of grace, so as to pour forth God's charity and to weave networks of charity.

This dynamic of charity received and given is what gives rise to the Church's social teaching, which is *caritas in veritate in re sociali*: the proclamation of Christ's love in society.

Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, n 5.