

Faith and Social Justice

Opening Prayer: CCUSA: Beatitudes Prayer

Leader: BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

All: Lord, help us to know we are poor and yet rich because of all that You have given us.

Leader: HAPPY ARE THE GENTLE FOR THEY SHALL HAVE THE EARTH FOR AN INHERITANCE.

All: Lord, make us gentle and sensitive to the needs of others, aware of the pain in our world.

Leader: HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.

All: Lord, help us to hear the cry of the poor, the homeless, the oppressed.

Leader: HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR JUSTICE, FOR THEY SHALL BE SATISFIED.

All: We thirst, Lord, for the day when all will recognize You in our brothers and sisters around us.

Leader: HAPPY ARE THE MERCIFUL, THEY SHALL HAVE MERCY SHOWN THEM.

All: May we be compassionate, Lord, to the elderly, the young, to the lonely, to those who oppose us, and to those who are fearful.

Leader: HAPPY ARE THE PURE OF HEART, THEY SHALL SEE GOD.

All: Grant us Lord, the visions to see things the way you see them, make us aware of the joys of life. Help us to see the beauty of the earth, people, of ourselves.

Leader: HAPPY ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, THEY SHALL BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD.

All: Lord, let us not rest comfortably as long as there is ill-will, dissension, division or disagreement.

Leader: HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED IN THE CAUSE OF RIGHT, THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

All: May we be willing to work and to suffer that right will prevail in our homes, and in our world today. Amen.

Discussion:

How do you define social justice? 5min

Wisdom 15

Thinking about poverty

Helpful Scripture Passages

"But you, our God, are good and true, slow to anger and governing all with mercy.

For even if we sin, we are yours, and know your might;

But we will not sin, knowing we belong to you.

For to know you well is complete justice,

and to know your might is the root of immortality." Wis. 15:1-3

Am I my brother's keeper? Gn 4:9-10

God the liberator. Ex 6:2-13, Ex 22, 23:9

Jesus comes to bring Good News to the poor....I, the Lord, love justice. Is 61

To know the Lord is to act justly Jer 22:16

Listen and Act. James 22-26

What does the Lord require: to do justice, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with our God. Mi 6:8

The Greatest Commandment. Mt 22:37-39

Whatever we do to our neighbor we do to Christ. Mt 25:31-46

The Beatitudes. Lk 6:20-26

6 Elements for Peace From “Culturing Peace in a Culture of Violence” by Jack Jezreel

1. **[Deliberate] Relationship with those at risk:** “the single biggest obstacle to the church’s mission and vision of peace with justice is the fact of the segregation of the poor/the oppressed/ the exploited/ the neglected/ the stranger from the comfortable/ the secure/ the satisfied.” It’s hard to care when we don’t see each other. “It is not enough for the people of God to sit at our computers in suburbia, clicking messages to members of congress. The reign of God is critically relational. We must be connected in real life, in real time, in kairos time. We learn much about God by looking into the eyes of the poor and vulnerable. And we discover that the world is much different than we thought. And we discover that we have a capacity—a holy capacity—to love bigger than we might have dreamed.”
2. **Justice Education:** “The single most repeated phrase in the Gospels is the phrase that Jesus uses to describe the vision and focus of his ministry: the Reign of God. 142 times in the four Gospels...the reign of service, reconciliation, justice, generosity, compassion and peacemaking. Know Catholic Social Teaching and take opportunities to learn more about our faith tradition.
3. **Simpler Lifestyles:** “The call to a simpler lifestyle is partially prompted by the observation that the world is at war because part of the world are literally sucking the life out of other parts. The history of affluence is the history of exploitation is the history of war. Our lifestyles require the plunder of the earth, require the cheap labor of other places, require the poverty of others..”
4. **Take Time to Pray:** “The hope is for integration, singleness of purpose, openness to a deepening relationship and a deepening commitment. Kathleen Norris describes prayer this way: ‘Prayer is not asking for what you think you want, but asking to be changed in ways you can’t imagine.’...prayer can help us to connect with the poor with open eyes and hearts... Our good work for the world will be hampered if we do not do god work for our souls.”
5. **Commitment to Nonviolence:** John Paul stated “War is a defeat for humanity.” The point is that the “lens of peacemaking gives us a capacity for discernment.” “ We are nonviolent, not because we simply eschew violence; rather, we are nonviolent because we are people who love like Jesus. When our lives are active and occupied in the name of doing good, there is little space for violence and doing harm.”
6. **Community:** “Big-heartedness always draws close to the other, always draws the other close. Francis of Assisi, Benedict, Dorothy Day, Jean Vanier- like Jesus himself- draw people naturally into relationship...We long to be connected, for healing, for vocation, and for mission.” We are about intentional community! “The community of faith can be a place that witnesses to what is holy, good, loving and life-giving by what it lives, by what it embodies. But like the other ingredients for peace mentioned so far, community is a commitment, a choice. And it involved effort, discipline and struggle. It is certainly not easy.” “Community is an engine for peace, it is fuel for justice. We are made for each other.”

Helpful websites for more Justice Education:

US Conference of Catholic Bishops: Justice Peace and Human Development: www.usccb.org/sdwp
Catholic Charities of Dallas: Missions/Social Concerns: www.CatholicCharitiesDallas.org
JustFaith Ministries: www.justfaith.org
Faithful Citizenship: www.faithfulcitizenship.org

Book/Reflection Resources:

“Cloud of Witnesses,” Jim Wallis and Joyce Hollyday
“Long Loneliness,” Dorothy Day
“Irresistible Revolution,” Shane Claiborne
“Everything Belongs,” Fr. Richard Rohr
“Gandhi, an Autobiography. The Story of my Experiments with Truth.” Mohandas K. Gandhi
“Living Peace,” John Dear

Get Involved!

Justice Revival: www.justicerevival.org
Catholic Charities of Dallas: www.CatholicCharitiesDallas.org
St. Vincent de Paul: www.sdvpdallas.org
Metro of Dallas Homeless Alliance: www.mdhadallas.org
Bread for the World: www.bread.org
Dallas Area Interfaith: www.dallasareainterfaith.org
ACE Fellowship (volunteer inter-city Catholic School): Norma Nelson. normanelson@gmail.com