



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

Social Justice

The Catholic Church has a long-standing tradition of commitment to Social Justice. The command to take care of the poor, sick, widows and orphans can be found throughout Sacred Scripture. The Church teaching on social justice is not simply that it is a nice thing to do. Rather, the commitment to social justice is deeply theological.

Certainly it would be impossible to cover all aspects of the Church's social teaching in a single issue of *What's What*. But as the Teens of the parish prepare to begin a week long service retreat, it is important to have a basic understanding of why Catholics commit themselves to social justice.

On the most basic level, the book of Genesis informs us that human beings are made

in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-7). In a sense we are icons of God. This distinguishes human beings from all other creatures. Because human beings are indeed images of God, they must always be respected as such.

The dignity and sacredness of Human Life is further evidence in the Gospel, where we learn that God takes on human flesh. The fact that God chooses to become a human being shows how profoundly human beings are from other creatures. Furthermore, Jesus is constantly upholding the dignity of all people, free and slave, poor and rich, sick and healthy. In our attempt to conform ourselves to Christ, we too must uphold the dignity of all people.

Therefore, the imperative to

pursue social justice is not an optional extra for Christians. We must acknowledge that all people are made in the image and likeness of God. In a special way, we must respond to those who are marginalized. It is in the marginalized that the image of God is being suppressed. As Christians we should be outraged by the way in which so many people are stripped of the dignity that rightfully belongs to them. When we become aware of such situations we must respond by restoring the icon, by upholding the dignity of the marginalized and showing the whole world that the image of God is present in all people.

When engaging issues of social justice, it is important for us to remember the reason we enter into these issues. Too often Christians confuse their mission. They fall into the secular trap of creating a perfect world rather than upholding the dignity of all people in order that all may see the image and likeness of God. While it would be nice to create a perfect world, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that this is not our primary mission. In fact, the Pope states that anyone who thinks that they can create a perfect world is the willing dupe of the devil. What make Christian social justice different from secular social service is that secular humanists attempt to create the perfect world, whereas the Christian recognizes that this world will never be perfect until

Issue 35 —
Social Justice
July 27, 2008

Things to talk about:

- What areas of social justice are of particular concern for you?
- What ways can your family get involved in social justice? How can you get others involved?
- How does social justice relate to your spiritual life?

the second coming of Christ. Instead the Christian's commitment to social justice is not an attempt to create the perfect world. Rather it is their insistence that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore every person has a dignity that is properly due him/her. When that dignity is removed or ignored, it becomes the responsibility (not option) of Christians everywhere to work to restore it.

While this is only a brief overview of Catholic Social Justice, I highly encourage every Catholic to read some of the resources listed on the back. Many are available for free online.

- Deacon Brian Carpenter

Church Teachings on Social Justice

When people discover they are loved by God, they see not only their own dignity as children of God who have an eternal destiny, but also that transcendent dignity in others as well. We weep at the sight of the injustice that plagues so much of the world. And people look "to encounter their neighbor in a network of relationships that are ever more authentically human" (n. 4).

Deep prayer, deep union with God, is essential for lasting positive social change. Without humility in the face of the Redeemer, agents of social change are prone to become tyrants.

The Compendium of Church Social Doctrine says it is "a genuine pastoral priority" to make Church social teaching better known. The compendium presents that teaching "in a complete and systematic manner," and is available for free online, or in print at most bookstores.



Saint of the Day: St. Ignatius of Loyola

July 30 is the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (more commonly known as the Jesuits).

The founder of the Jesuits was on his way to military fame and fortune when a cannon ball shattered his leg. Because there were no books of romance on hand during his convalescence, he whiled away the time reading a life of Christ and lives of the saints. His conscience was deeply touched, and a long, painful turning to Christ began. Having seen the Mother of God in a vision, he made a pilgrimage to her shrine at Montserrat (near Barcelona). He remained for almost a year at nearby Manresa, sometimes with the Dominicans, sometimes in a pauper's hospice, often in a cave in the hills praying. After a period of great peace of mind, he went through a harrowing trial of scruples. There was no comfort in anything—prayer, fasting, sacraments, penance. At length, his peace of mind returned.

It was during this year of conversion that he began to write down material that

later became his greatest work, the *Spiritual Exercises*.

He finally achieved his purpose of going to the Holy Land, but could not remain, as he planned, because of the hostility of the Turks. He spent the next 11 years in various European universities, studying with great difficulty, beginning almost as a child. Like many others, he fell victim twice to the suspensions of the time, and was twice jailed for brief periods.

In 1534, at the age of 43, he and six others (one of whom was St. Francis Xavier) vowed to live in poverty and chastity and to go to the Holy Land. If this became impossible, they vowed to offer themselves to the apostolic service of the pope. The latter became the only choice. Four years later Ignatius made the association permanent. The new Society of Jesus was approved by Paul III, and Ignatius was elected to serve as the first general.

When companions were sent on various

missions by the pope, Ignatius remained in Rome, consolidating the new venture, but still finding time to found homes for orphans, catechumens and penitents. He founded the Roman College, intended to be the model of all other colleges of the Society.

Ignatius was a true mystic. He centered his spiritual life on the essential foundations of Christianity—the Trinity, Christ, the Eucharist. His spirituality is expressed in the Jesuit motto, *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*—"for the greater glory of God." In his concept, obedience was to be the prominent virtue, to assure the effectiveness and mobility of his men. All activity was to be guided by a true love of the Church and unconditional obedience to the Holy Father, for which reason all professed members took a fourth vow to go wherever the pope should send them for the salvation of souls.

From www.americancatholic.org/saintoftheday.html



Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

- Ignatius is the author of the spiritual exercises. These exercises are used as a tool for discernment
- Many people make retreats that use the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. These retreats are often made in silence over a period of 7 or 30 days.
- Ignatius recommended this prayer to penitents: "Receive, Lord, all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. You have given me all that I have, all that I am, and I surrender all to your divine will, that you dispose of me. Give me only your love and your grace. With this I am rich enough, and I have no more to ask."

More about Social Justice

Here are some resources available for learning about Catholic Social Teaching.

[Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#) Available in bookstores and online at www.vatican.va

[Themes of Catholic Social Teaching](#) <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/excerpt.shtml>

[Rerum Novarum](#) by Pope Leo XIII Available at www.vatican.va

These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.

"What's What" is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.