

Discussion Guide for Social Justice Sunday Statement 2008

Introduction

This Discussion Guide is designed to be used with the 2008 Social Justice Sunday Statement. It has three sessions and may be used with a group during Lent or any time throughout the Church's Year.

Outline

Session 1 – The Call

Social Justice Sunday Statement pp. 3–5

Session 2 – Recognising the face of Christ

Social Justice Sunday Statement pp. 6–12

Session 3 – Our Response

Social Justice Sunday Statement pp. 13–14

Suggested Procedure

Preparation for each Session

Before meeting, each participant reads the section of the 2008 Social Justice Sunday Statement, as above.

Group Meeting

Always begin with an Acknowledgement of Country, for example:

We acknowledge the _____ People, the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet.

- The **Prayer** may be prayed together
- Pause for 1–3 minutes after the **Reading** and again after the **Reflection**
- Read the first question **For Discussion**, then allow at least 5 minutes for discussion. Repeat this for each question.
- After the discussion, read the **Action**, then invite participants to suggest actions that flow from the discussion.
- Pray the **Blessing** together at the conclusion of the meeting.

Please note

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council offers this Discussion Guide as an additional resource for the 2008 Social Justice Sunday Statement. If you have any questions, suggestions or feedback please contact: Suzette Clark rsc. Phone: 02 8306 3499 / 3413. Email: suzettec@acsjc.org.au



© Australian Catholic Social Justice Council
 Phone 02 8306 3499
 Fax 02 8306 3498
 Email admin@acsjc.org.au
 Website www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au
 PO Box 7246 Alexandria NSW 2015

Session 1 ~ The Call

Prayer

Gracious God, you gather us as a people of your own, gracing us and inviting us to let go of what possesses us and to dedicate our lives to you and to all who are an expression of your presence in our world.

Inspire us to listen to your Word and to respond to your invitation.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

Reading

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No-one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and your mother."' He said to him: "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing: go, sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Mark 10:17–22 (Social Justice Sunday Statement p. 3)

For Reflection

This man had probably inherited his many possessions. Now he wants to inherit eternal life! Jesus' initial response is to keep the commandments. The man indicates he has kept all these since his youth. Notice the word 'kept' – it's as if he has a collection of commandments, and is looking to collect more, like one collects possessions. Jesus tells him that he is lacking one thing – to complete his collection, he must give everything away!

Perhaps Jesus sensed that the man's possessions had become his idol, his alternative god, the demon that would possess him and eventually destroy him unless he renounced it. Perhaps Jesus realised that this man was very anxious and worried, and kept every commandment out of fear, not out of love.

In Jesus' day, possessions were seen as a sign of God's blessing and this man did not want to lose God's blessing because that could mean losing his possessions.

For Discussion

How does the Word of God call us to conversion, challenging us to see and act differently?

How is the challenge Jesus presented to the rich young man the same as we face in Australia today?

What are the consequences of confusing wants and needs, for ourselves and for society?

What sort of society do we want now and for the future?

Action

Live simply, aware of what we need rather than what we want.

By choosing to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor, we can create a world in which human dignity is respected and everyone can reach their full potential, and ensure that our planet has a future.

Blessing

May we be blessed with the desire to value being rather than having,
may we be grateful for what we have,
and may we willingly participate in the creation of a society where we are in service to one another,
acting for the common good.

Session 2 ~ Recognising Christ amongst us

Prayer

Gracious God, you have called us to be an expression of your presence in our world. We affirm our belief in your love for us and for all who share this planet with us. May our indifference be turned into compassion and may the desires of those with abundance make place for the needs of those who are poor. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

Reading

The bread which you do not use is the bread of the hungry; the garment hanging in the wardrobe is the garment of the one who is naked; the shoes you do not wear are the shoes of the one who is barefoot; the money you keep locked away is the money of the poor; the acts of charity you do not perform are so many injustices that you commit.

St Basil the Great, Homily 8 (Social Justice Sunday Statement p. 6)

For Reflection

The Word of God constantly reminds us and empowers us to recognise the human dignity of all people, and challenges us to be the Good News especially to the poor and marginalised.

We are invited to choose between good and bad, the godly and the ungodly. Our decision enables us to become people filled with love, peace, tolerance, compassion and joy. We can determine the qualities we will nurture in our life, and what to do with the gifts and talents we have and the belongings we gather.

All human beings are interconnected. Attachment to wealth and hoarding during our short lives on this earth will impoverish our spirit and relegate others to poverty.

It is a measure, not of our ordinariness, but of God's extraordinary grace and abundance. Our acts of kindness and generosity are not limited to people, but will be extended to the earth and its creatures, as well.

For Discussion

What would be the consequences and the blessings of taking on Basil's challenge as a way of life?

What are the social, cultural and spiritual consequences and dimensions of poverty?

Does owning possessions and wealth give us the right to exclude them from those in need?

Does our wealth include our skills, abilities and gifts? How can we share these?

How can we as Church, nation and society be in service to one another?

Action

Do something out of the ordinary to help someone who isn't expecting it, knowing that by God's grace even our smallest acts of generosity have the power to transform.

Blessing

In the midst of the goodness of this day, we count our blessings.

May we build a just society, working together to ensure poverty is eradicated and all are able to live a full life.

May we notice and address the needs of our most vulnerable sisters and brothers.

May we yearn for the good of all creation.

May we always act with kindness,

knowing that no act is too small nor too random to be a blessing from God.

Session 3 ~ Our Response

Prayer

Gracious God, your image is alive in every human person
giving to each of us an inviolable dignity.
Create in us the desire to work together
and a willingness to share who we are and what we have with others.

Jesus is the good news to the poor.
As his followers, may we recognise the call to be the same. Amen

Reading

It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards 'having' rather than 'being' and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself.

Pope John Paul II (1991) *Centesimus Annus* (Social Justice Sunday Statement p. 4)

According to the teaching of the Gospel, we are not owners but rather administrators of the goods we possess: these, then, are not to be considered as our exclusive possession, but means through which the Lord calls each one of us to act as a steward of His providence for our neighbour.

Pope Benedict XVI, Message for Lent 2008 (Social Justice Sunday Statement p. 4)

For Reflection

Christ calls us, as he did the rich young man in the Gospel of Mark, not to have more but to be more. This call and how we respond are central to our life as Church and community.

As Christians we are called to recognise as our sisters and brothers those who are poor or marginalised. We are called to notice them, to respect and restore their human dignity, to walk with them, to share our resources.

We are invited to reflect on our lifestyle and choose to live more simply, in a spirit of solidarity with the poor. By living life more in terms of what we need, rather than what we want, we will be less concerned with material acquisition and freed from the clutter of consumerism. Most importantly, we will be in a better position to recognise the needs of others and to see the face of the poor.

Through this commitment to justice, seen clearly in the ministry of Jesus, we receive a strong message of hope about what God's reign on earth can achieve in ending poverty and oppression today. The challenge to us, his followers, is to see the face of the poor and oppressed in our society, to stand with them giving voice to their plight and working for change.

For Discussion

What steps could be taken to ensure that the common wealth of Australia is dedicated to the common good?

How can we as Church assist the Government's policy of social inclusion, ensuring that all Australians participate in the economic, social and civic life of our society?

What is the message of the Eucharist to a consumerist society?

What is the challenge of the Eucharist to us as participants?

Action

Recognise the people in need around us and the obligation to do something about it.

Blessing

Gracious God, bless us with ears to hear, eyes to see and hearts to love.
May we reflect you in our way of life, in our choices, in our words and in our actions.
May we inspire one another in our endeavours to respond to your Word.