

Social Justice Sunday Liturgy Notes

September 30, 2012

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Social Justice Sunday

Social Justice Statement 2012–2013

The Gift of Family in Difficult Times

The Social and economic challenges facing families today

Overview:

In the Social Justice Statement for 2012–2013, the Catholic Bishops of Australia focus on the social and economic challenges facing families today and call for concern for the families who are most vulnerable.

The statement is titled *The Gift of Family in Difficult Times: The Social and economic challenges facing families today*.

The statement affirms the family as the basis of our community of faith and the very foundation of society. Nurturing a family is a vocation, inspired by love, which faces many challenges. The social Justice Statement names the social and economic structures of our society that impact in a significant way on the majority of families. These are named as competing for time, competing for wealth and the pressure these factors put on family relationships. It also calls for us to ‘rediscover’ the Sabbath and to show a special concern for poor and vulnerable families.

Liturgy Notes

The following notes are provided to assist in linking to the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time with Social Justice Sunday 2012 and the Social Justice Statement 2012-13.

Welcome

Today is Social Justice Sunday. The Australian Catholic Bishops have published a Social Justice Statement, titled: *The Gift of Family in Difficult Times: The Social and economic challenges facing families today*. The Statement challenges us to look more critically at the social and economic pressures on families and to strive for a healthier work-life balance and have special concern for families who are most vulnerable.

Readings

The Readings for the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B) relate strongly to the message of this year’s Social Justice Statement.

Numbers 11:25-29

In the first reading from the book of **Numbers**, the seventy elders call into question the ministry of Eldad and Medad, even though they have clearly been gifted by the spirit. Moses supports the work of Eldad and Medad and wishes that everyone was so filled with the Spirit.

Psalm 18

The psalm reminds us to that *the law of the Lord is perfect*. In calling us to ‘rediscover the Sabbath’ the Social Justice statement reminds us that we need quiet time to be more open to hearing the law of the Lord.

James 5:1-6

In the letter of James the rich are chastised for oppressing their workers and are reminded of the limited value and longevity of material wealth.

Gospel: Mark 9:38-48

The Gospel reiterates the message of the first reading: that nobody has a monopoly on the Spirit of God. We all called to respect the gifts among all women and men. The second part of the Gospel reminds us of the dire consequences of ‘scandalising the little ones.’

Reflection on the readings/Homily Notes

It seems a long stretch from the first part of the Gospel, reminding us that no one has a monopoly on the Spirit, to warnings about scandalising the little ones. But perhaps not. It may be that those who think they know all the answers, who think only they know the best way for people to behave, are the very ones who become isolated in their own convictions and don’t even hear the little ones, let alone have any idea of how they feel.

The ‘little ones’ may be children or they may be those whom the Bishops name in the Social Justice Statement as the most vulnerable people in our society: struggling Indigenous families, asylum seekers and refugees, people living in poverty, homeless people and people with disability.

The first reading and the Gospel remind us that God’s Spirit is not bound by our categories. The Spirit and the work of God is not limited to people of a certain gender, race, nation, ethnic group, age, or other characteristic. Indeed, the work of God’s Spirit is often most powerfully manifested in those who do not fit our categories. The moments of challenge and of grace may well be those moments that call us beyond our comfort zones.

The Social Justice Statement calls us to have a special concern for the poor and those who are vulnerable. Among the most vulnerable in Australia today are asylum seekers and refugees.

Australia has had a proud tradition of generosity towards people fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries ... In recent years, however, Australia has been much less welcoming to people who have come here seeking refuge, especially those who have arrived by boat. Governments have tried to deter people who have a right to seek refuge here by locking them up in remote centres, or diverting them to other countries. (p. 4)

In the second reading James reminds the rich of the limited life of material wealth. *Your wealth is all rotting, your clothes are all eaten up by moths. All your gold and your silver are corroding away and the same corrosion will be your sentence, and eat into your body.*

He castigates those who made their fortunes by cheating their labourers of fair wages. The anomaly of prosperity side by side with poverty is still with us and is addressed by the Bishops in the Social Justice statement:

It is a concern therefore that in our prosperous nation many families are facing social and economic pressures that threaten their survival: they are struggling to meet the cost of raising a family, to live in dignity and to contribute to the genuine development of their members. (p. 3)

The Social Justice Statement names the pressures of excessive overtime, often not paid; fly-in-fly-out work patterns; and the increase in casual and irregular jobs. All of these put pressure on parents to work multiple jobs and irregular hours leaving little or no time for families to be together.

It calls us to restore a healthy work-life balance and to rediscover the importance Sabbath; to show a special concern for the poor; and to come together in Eucharist to nourish our community and strengthen our commitment to serve others.

Prayers of the Faithful

Introduction:

We pray to the God of Creation who in Jesus calls us all to fullness of life animated by the spirit.

We pray that we be open to recognise all people as made in the image and likeness of God.
Let us pray: ***God of life hear us.***

We pray that the leaders of our nation – politicians, scientists, economists, teachers, artists and poets – use their gifts to shape us as a community steeped in justice and respect for all people.
Let us pray: ***God of life hear us.***

We pray for the leaders in our Church as they foster the gifts of the Spirit among themselves and all men and women in these challenging times.
Let us pray: ***God of life hear us.***

We pray for all women and men who continue to work for just wages and working conditions. May their efforts be supported and bear fruit in fair wages and creative work environments.
Let us pray: ***God of life hear us.***

We pray who for all those who support families who are vulnerable.
Let us pray: ***God of life hear us.***

We pray for all families that they may have enriching time together and reach out to those in need.
Let us pray: ***God of life, hear us.***

God of life, we pray for all families that all people may have life to the full and that we in our families, church and society work tirelessly to bring this about.

We make this prayer in Jesus' name.

For the Parish Bulletin

We celebrate Social Justice Sunday on 30th September. The 2012–13 Social Justice Statement is titled '*The Gift of Family in Difficult Times: the Social and economic challenges facing families today*'. The Statement asks Catholics to think about these challenges and to give special consideration to the most vulnerable people in our society.

For further details about the Social Justice Statement, visit the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au or call (02) 8306 3499.

The ACSJC website has resources available for download free of charge. They include a PowerPoint presentation and a Community Education resource suitable for parish groups and senior students.

Suggested Music

The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor (St Louis Jesuits)

No Right to Crush God's People (Peter Kearney)

The Beatitudes (Peter Kearney)

Bread of life, Hope for the World (B. Farrell)

Christ Be Our Light (B. Farrell)

Community of Christ (B. Farrell)

Harvest of Justice (D. Haas)

Voices That Challenge (D. Haas)

Christ Be Our Light (D. Haas)

Bring Forth the Kingdom (M. Haugen)

Come to the Feast (M. Haugen)

We Are Called (D. Haas)

Suggestion: The following prayer, issued with the Statement as a prayer card, could be given to parishioners or printed on the bulletin and said together.

Sometimes in the rush of life

The prayer which most often escapes our lips is: *God help us!*

So, God of all creation,

You who made the stars and the heavens,

Who created such wondrous gifts for this planet,

And created women and men in your own image,

Help us!

Each time we utter that plea, aloud or in our hearts;

in hope, or in exasperation,

Know that we are opening ourselves to your unending love.

Help us to stop and take time:

Time to look deeply at the world you have created,

and give thanks.

Time to be with one another, in our families,

long enough to appreciate each others' joys and sorrows,

and know in the depths of our hearts,

in the comfort of our kitchens,

and in the serenity of our sheds and gardens,

that we do not journey alone.

And from this strength, face calmly the turmoils that arise.

Help us to value the work of our hands, minds and hearts,

as a way of participating in your ongoing creation,

as a way of building relationships and building a more just society.

Give us the insight and courage to build a society

where everyone shares the riches of the earth and the wealth of our endeavours.

Help us to reach out to those less fortunate than ourselves:

Indigenous families, asylum seekers and refugees,

people who are homeless, or living in poverty,

families struggling to meet the needs of those with a disability.

Jesus, your Son, knew the reality of living in a family.

Together they knew the harsh reality of a forced journey

to Bethlehem and then to Egypt.

In Nazareth he learnt the grind and delight of daily work.

Through him we pray for all families,

that we may all live life to the full

and that we all, in our families, Church and society,

work tirelessly to bring this about.

We make our prayer through Jesus your Son

in the company of his family.

God, help us. Amen.

For further details about the Catholic Bishops' Statement, visit the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website www.acsjc.org.au or call (02) 8306 3499