



International Solidarity Reflection

Social Justice

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Introduction

“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.” (*Justice in the World*, 6, Synod of Bishops 1971)

Call to Prayer

This “action on behalf of justice” to which we are called is echoed in *Call to Solidarity* when we say, “... we are ready, personally and communally to risk all we are and all we have for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ.”

Experience

The *Image of the Two Feet of Social Justice* is often used to explain the necessity of direct service to meet human needs *and* advocacy for social change. Just as we need two feet to walk, we need both direct service and social change for our participation in the “transformation of the world” mentioned above.

Direct service comes in many shapes and sizes. We may serve in a soup kitchen, contribute to a favorite charity, mentor or tutor a person in need, or ... (Please share how you are involved in direct service.)

Social change happens when we participate in self-help projects, advocate for just public policies, work in some way to correct long term injustices, or ... (Please share an example of a time when you worked to bring about social change.)

Which actions were easier? Which were more rewarding?

Reflection

“Charity will never be true charity unless it takes justice into account...Let no one attempt with small gifts of charity to exempt themselves from the great duties imposed by justice.” (Pope Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, #49)

One summer in the village, the people in the town gathered for a picnic. As they leisurely shared food and conversation, someone noticed a baby in the river, struggling and crying. The baby was going to drown!

Someone rushed to save the baby. Then, they noticed another screaming baby in the river, and they pulled that baby out. Soon, more babies were seen drowning in the river, and the townspeople were pulling them out as fast as they could. It took great effort, and they began to organize their activities in order to save the babies as they came down the river. As everyone else was busy in the rescue efforts to save the babies, two of the townspeople started to run away along the shore of the river.

"Where are you going?" shouted one of the rescuers. "We need you here to help us save these babies!" "We are going upstream to stop whoever is throwing them in!"

The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts." (*Gaudium et Spes*, #1 the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)

What griefs and anxieties of people of our times echo in your heart today?

Action

Call To Solidarity: "... we are ready to lay down our lives to be bread that is blessed, broken and shared for the life of the world."

Think of a person or a group of people for whom you are concerned. How can you "save" them? How can you "go upstream" to find and eliminate the cause of their problems? What will you need to "lay down" to do it?

Imagine using your "two feet" to address our solidarity with all creation. What sort of direct service actions might you choose? What social changes are needed? How can you help? The website www.earthcharter.org/ offers helpful suggestions in many languages.

Imagine using your "two feet" to "promote education for all, especially those who are marginalized and forgotten." The *Education For All* initiative offers goals, such as offering free and compulsory primary education for all. www.unesco.org What kind of direct service could bring that about? What social change is needed? How could you work to make it happen?

Closing Prayer: Grant us, Lord God, a vision of your world as your love would have it:

- a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;
- a world where the riches of creation are shared, and everyone can enjoy them;
- a world where different races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect;
- a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.

Give us the inspiration and courage to build it, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Closing Hymn: choose an appropriate hymn with the theme of the Beatitudes, or promoting the Reign of God.