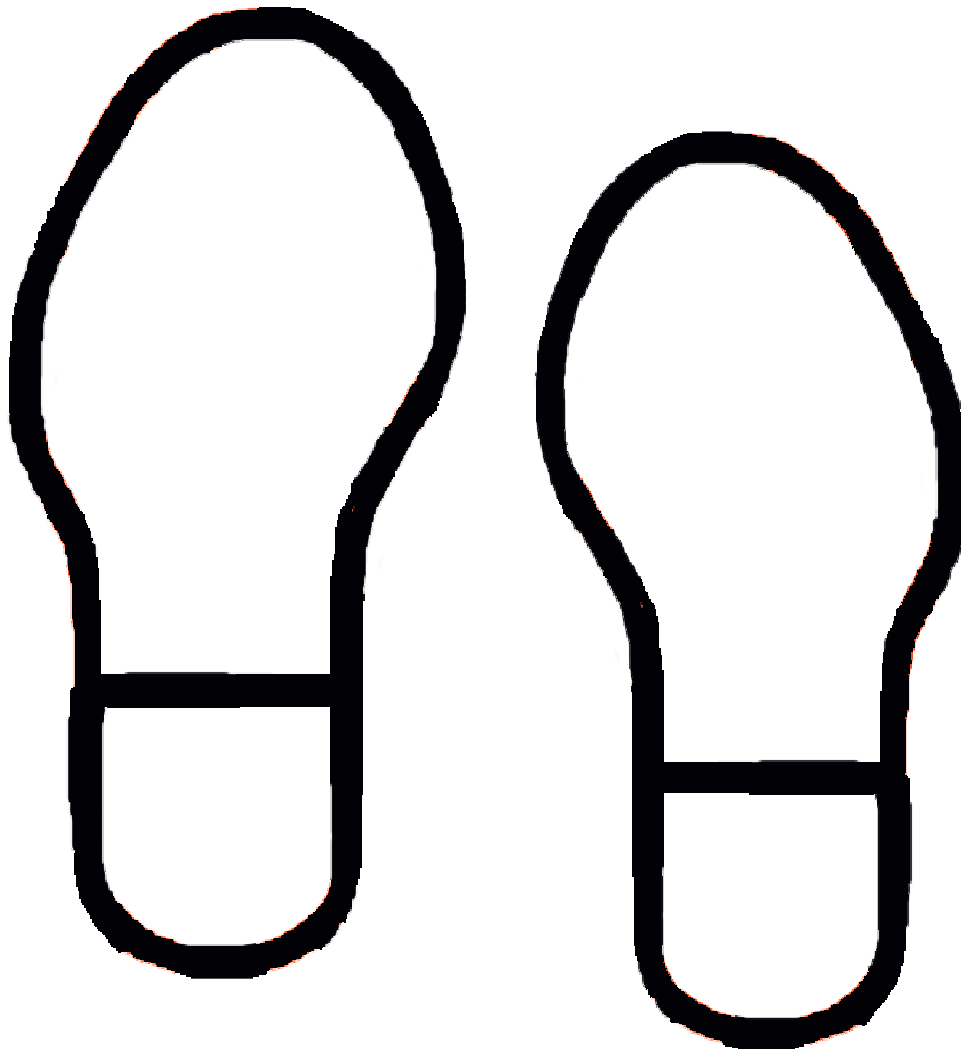


Charity and Justice: Bringing the Social Mission Together

One Session Group Reflection



Office for Social Justice
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Charity and Justice: Bringing the Social Mission Together

The social mission is something that we are asked to embrace as followers of Jesus Christ. The social mission has “two feet” both of which are necessary in order to be in right relationship with our God and God's people. One foot, Charity, responds to immediate people in crisis. A second foot, Justice, asks the question WHY? and responds with actions for social change. Why are people suffering or living in poverty? What can we do to change the situation? How can we, the community of faith, be co-creators with God for the fullness of life?

This reflection piece is designed for parishioners who provide services for people living in poverty and for those who are working to change policies and institutions to reduce the incidents of poverty. It is an hour to hour and half meeting for those engaged in the social mission.

There are many individuals in many parishes who respond to the needs of others by offering time, money, and advocacy. Those providing services know the stories of individuals in need, have insights into the difficulties they confront, and learn about poverty issues firsthand. Those working to change the systems have insights into the political landscape with its obstacles and possibilities.

This time of meeting together offers an opportunity to learn from each other and how to deepen mutual efforts in favor of those living in poverty.

This session is 1 hour to 1 ½ hours long. All that is needed is the material included here and one person to facilitate the sessions. Directions are included and we ask that you (the group) fill out the evaluation and return it to us at the Office for Social Justice. Questions or Comments, call:

S. Kerry O'Reilly: 651-291-4482
Cheryl Peterson: 651-291-4490
Kathy Tomlin: 651-291-4537.

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Notes for the Facilitator

Goals:

- ◆ To explore what parishioners, as service providers and advocates, have learned about poverty and the issues that people are facing.
- ◆ To recognize the importance of the services for people in crisis and the need for long-term policy solutions.
- ◆ To foster a sense of connection and appreciation for both parts of the social mission.
- ◆ To explore the root causes of poverty.

Direct service is necessary to prevent the immediate repercussions of poverty which could result in greater illness, broken families and even death. It is a service that is needed again and again. Advocacy is necessary in order to create conditions that will keep people from becoming impoverished. Both feet (charity and justice) are essential to our Catholic faith.

This conversation is designed to help people share their reflections on how they feel about their work, how they may have changed or grown in their service or policy advocacy and what questions they may have about their experience doing social ministry.

THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

Your role, as facilitator, is to provide the opportunity for people to talk together. There are no “correct” answers as people reflect on their experience.

There are two options for looking at systemic causes of poverty. The “Why Web” asks people to get out of their chairs and form a circle. The “Poverty Wheel” uses paper with circles on it for the same purpose. Choose the option you and your group are most comfortable with.

A few hints:

- ◆ Start and end on time – it is respectful and will bring people back.
- ◆ Involve participants in the prayers. See separate prayer sheets. If you wish to make copies for the group, feel free to do so.
- ◆ If there will be a number of people who do not know each other; name tags would be a good idea.

Materials needed before the meeting:

- ◆ Flipchart or large pieces of paper / pens
- ◆ A ball of yarn or string or “Poverty Wheel”
- ◆ Make copies of “Two Feet”, the Evaluation, and Prayer Sheet all found at the end of this document.

Introduction and Welcome

Welcome everyone. Summarize a few points from previous page.

Reading: James 2, 14-17 (Ask people to listen for what strikes them)

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if a person claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about the physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

- After reading the passage, allow some time for quiet.
- Then ask people to indicate what word or phrase struck them. There is no need to explain, simply indicate a word or phrase.
- Another short pause for quiet, then offer the prayer below.

Prayer: DARE TO HOPE

We dare to imagine a world where hunger
has no chance to show its face.
We dare to dream of a world where wars and terror
are afraid to leave their mark.
We long to believe in a world of hope unchained
and lives unfettered.
We dare to work for the creation of a world
where your people are free from poverty.
Dare we open minds to difference?
Dare we open our lives to change?
Your Kingdom come, O Lord, Your will be done.
Amen. (Linda Jones)

Invitation

Invite each person to introduce her/himself and share:

***Why do you do what you do in your
social ministry work of charity and justice?***

After this sharing, ask the group to reflect together:

- ◆ What did you hear most consistently in the comments?
- ◆ What surprised you?
- ◆ In what way does the work you do meet the needs of those you serve?
- ◆ What challenge do you find in the responses of this group?
- ◆ What connects the service of charity and justice?
- ◆ What have you received from being engaged in this work?

The "Two Feet"

Handout the sheet and look it over together.

- What work in the parish is the charity foot?
- What work in the parish is the justice foot?
 - Give yourselves a pat on the back.
 - What else could be added?

A Look at Issues

[Write issues on a flipchart if possible.]

What are underlying issues related to the charity work this parish does?

What are other issues that people in poverty are facing?

Example: Food shelf is necessary because of hunger

Develop a "Why Web": Why are People Poor?

The String Why Web:

- Form a circle of 6-8 people. Ask them to identify an issue related to people living in poverty.
[If they get stuck ask them to look over the list that is on the flipchart or suggest one education, child care costs, low wages, no insurance, lack of affordable housing, tax policies, heating costs too high, racism, immigration status, health care...]
- Create a why web:
 1. One person holds on to one end of a ball of yarn or string and identifies the issue selected in response to the question, *Why are People Poor?*, Then throw the ball ACROSS the circle for someone to catch, while holding onto the end of the yarn.
 2. That second person now identifies the issue selected in response to the question, *Why are People Poor?*, and throws the ball ACROSS the circle.
 3. This continues until all people have responded and are holding the yarn. It should look like a web on the inside of the circle with lines criss-crossing. If the yarn is very loose, ask people to step back and pull the lines taut.
- Ask, first to any people who are NOT in the circle, what they see.
- Ask one person in the circle to pull on their string and then ask who can feel that pull? What are the issues? (perhaps child care costs and low wages)
- Ask the group what connection they see between these issues.
- Do this several more times, asking others in the group to pull on their string and see what issues feel it and how they are connected.

- Ask the group for what conclusions can be drawn: *[such as]*
 1. These issues are connected to each other. They cause each other, impact each other. An issue can create another issue or make it worse
 2. Improving one issue can improve another.
 3. The web illustrates how connected our social life is.
 4. These connections show that we live within various systems (health care, educational, business, governmental etc.) and these systems interact with each other.
 5. Helping people in poverty is complicated and it is important to find the underlying cause.
 6. We need lots of people to make change.

Take a minute to “study” the look of the web and do a bit of pulling on it.

Conversation:

- When in the work you have done in either charity or justice have you seen these connections? Can you tell a story as an example?
- How could more people be involved in our parish social ministry of charity and justice?
- What recommendations do you have?
- How can we support each other in our different efforts – direct service support advocacy; advocacy support direct service.

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OR

Develop a “Poverty Wheel”: Why are People Poor?

- Each person receives a Poverty Wheel sheet (see last page).
 - Within the smaller circles write down causes of poverty, or answer the question, “Why are people poor?”
- [If they get stuck ask them to look over the list that is on the flipchart or suggest one education, child care costs, low wages, no insurance, lack of affordable housing, tax policies, heating costs too high, racism, immigration status, health care...]* Encourage them to be as concrete as possible.
- Ask the group to give some of their responses and make a large Poverty Wheel on flipchart paper that all can see.
 - Ask the group which of the issues are connected to each other, drawing a line between those issues as they are mentioned.

[Issues will be connected to each other over and over – lack of education leads to low wages. Tax policies can lead to cuts in education. Racism affects wages which means may not buy insurance etc.]

- Allow the group to keep pointing out connections and continue to draw lines, in different colors if possible, and eventually a “web” is formed.

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Hand out Evaluations

Give enough time for each person to respond to the evaluation. Ask people to hand them in on their way out, or leave them in the middle of the table.

Closing Prayer

Pray this concluding prayer together as a group.

Good and gracious God,
we thank you for touching our lives
and calling us to witness to the love of Jesus.
As we acknowledge our failings,
make us a people of forgiveness and welcome,
creating in us a place of justice and peace.
As we open our minds and hearts to the guidance of your Holy Spirit,
Make us a Gospel people.
May our hearts burn within us, as we help others discover
Your gracious presence.
We pray in the Holy Spirit through Jesus.

Amen.

Thank everyone for coming and yourself for a job well done!

EVALUATION

Your comments are important and help us to make changes when needed and also keep what is working. We welcome all comments on your experience of this reflection.

On a scale from 1-5 (5 being the best)

1. How helpful did you find today's meeting? _____

Comments:

2. Did you receive what you expected from this meeting?

Yes _____ No _____

3. Check each of the statements that are **TRUE** for you:

_____ The differences between Charity and Justice are clear to me.

_____ The similarities between Charity and Justice are clear to me.

_____ It is helpful to me to hear from others about why they do this volunteer work.

_____ This reflection was redundant for me.

_____ A discussion of the underlying issues was helpful.

_____ I would like to see all of us working more closely together to get more people involved in social ministry.

_____ I would like to see all of us working together on a common issue.

_____ I would recommend this reflection to others.

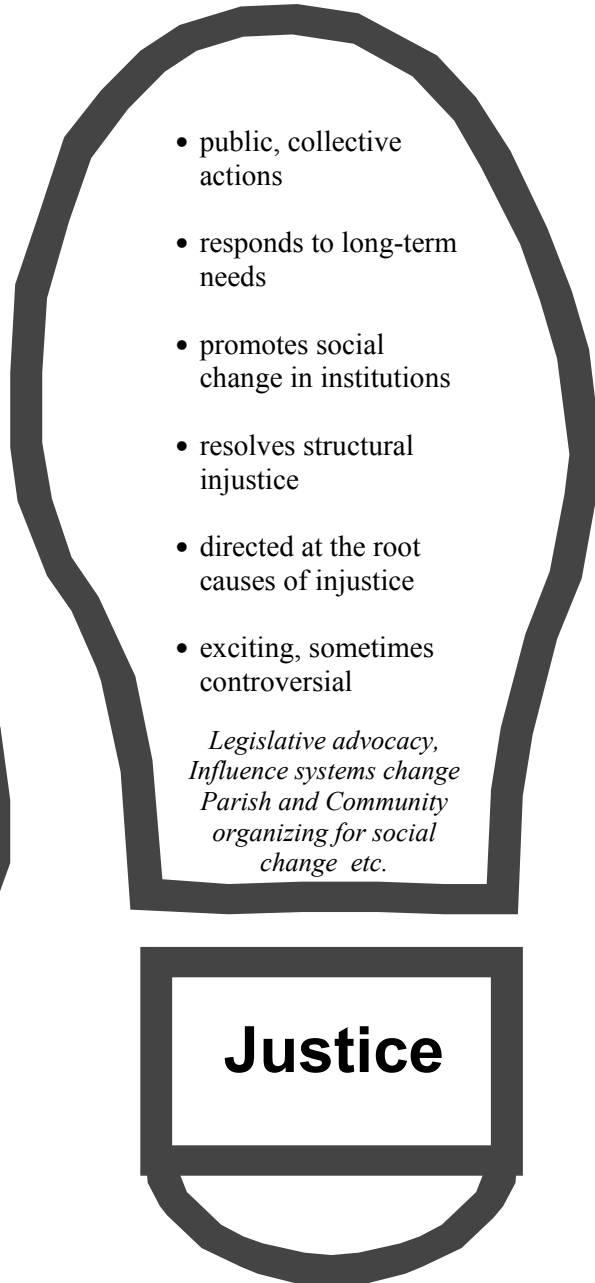
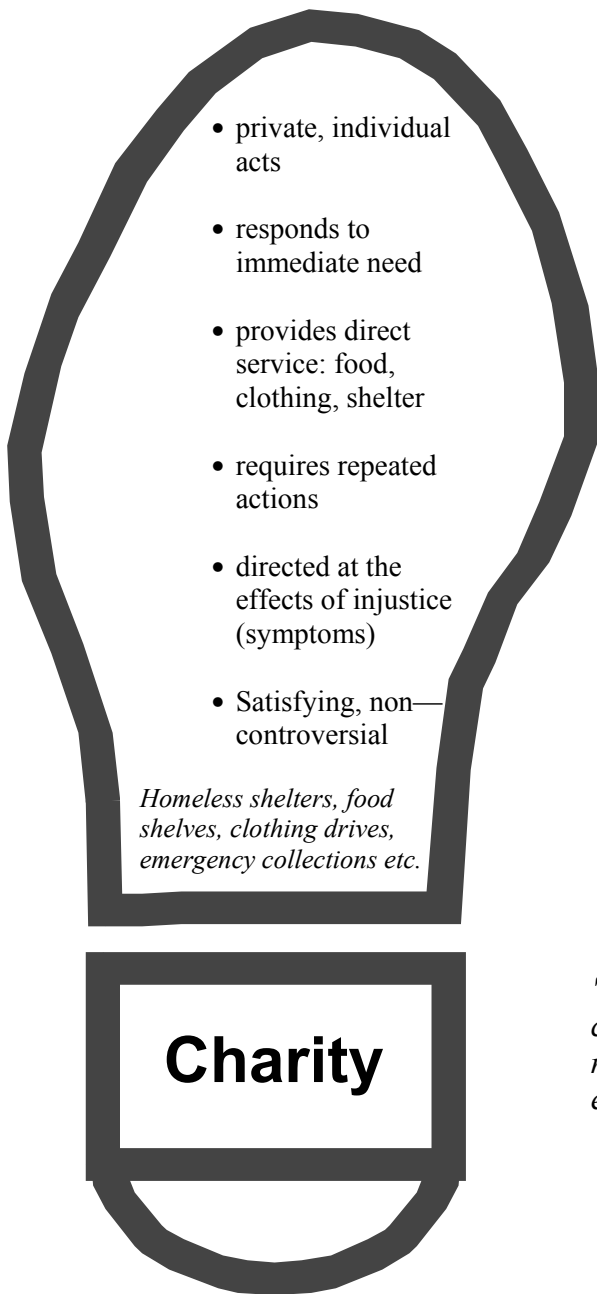
One change I would suggest is:

One area I would like to know more is:

Name (optional) _____

Parish _____

The "Two Feet" of Social Ministry



"Service and action, charity and justice are complementary components of parish social ministry. Neither alone is sufficient; both are essential signs of the gospel at work"

(U.S. Bishops Communities of Salt and Light, 1993)

A Poverty Wheel
Why are people poor?

