



Twenty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time [b]

September 9, 2012

Readings

Isaiah 35:4-7a
James 2:1-5
Mark 7:31-37

Calendar

September 8: Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
September 9: Feast of St. Peter Claver,
September 11: eleventh Anniversary of the Events of September 11, 2001
September 15: National Hispanic Heritage Month begins. (ends October 15)

Quotes

The dignity of the individual and the demands of justice require, particularly today, that economic choices do not cause disparities in wealth to increase in an excessive and morally unacceptable manner, and that we continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone.

-- Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate, 32

Beginning our discussion of the rights of the human person, we see that everyone has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services. ... Therefore a human being also has the right to security in cases of sickness, inability to work, widowhood, old age, unemployment, or in any other case in which one is deprived of the means of subsistence through no fault of one's own.

-- John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, 11

In the Sunday Eucharist, the believing heart opens wide to embrace all aspects of the church. But ... far from trying to create a narrow "gift" mentality, St Paul calls rather for a demanding culture of sharing, to be lived not only among the members of the community itself but in society as a whole."

-- John Paul II

In our own time, there are so many needs which demand a compassionate response from Christians. Our world is entering the new millennium burdened by the contradictions of an economic, cultural and technological progress which offers immense possibilities to a fortunate few, while leaving millions of others not only on the margins of progress but in living conditions far below the minimum demanded by human dignity. How can it be that even today there are still people dying of hunger? Condemned to illiteracy? Lacking the most basic medical care? Without a roof over their heads?

-- John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 50

Thoughts for your consideration

In today's selection from the letter of James, the early community is challenged to reflect on how the rich and the poor are given different treatment in the assembly. Catholic Social Teaching invites us to reflect on that same partiality or inequality as it plays out in our times.

- How just is the difference in salary between the top executives and the other workers in our nation?
- How fair are the inequalities between the resources of different school districts in our country? How fair is it to the children?
- How just is the political influence of different groups in our city? Which neighborhoods get better services? Which groups seem to have more power?
- How fair is our political system when the rich can spend unlimited amounts of money to influence the outcome of our elections?
- How fair is the power of different nations at the various international gatherings? Do all nations have fair input? Are decisions on trade dominated and controlled by the powerful nations or the wealthy corporations to preserve their advantage? Do the poor nations have a chance?
- How just was the special government assistance that was given out to respond to the fiscal and economic problems in our recession? How were entities that are "too big to fail" being treated? How were the average families who are facing foreclosure treated?

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The readings from Isaiah and Mark talk of God's healing power. God looks on those most in need and desires to respond and heal. ["Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing."] Catholic Social Teaching invites us to reflect on those in our world today who are most in need of God's healing: those without good medical care, those suffering from food insecurity, those denied basic human rights, those who have no political rights, those who are homeless or who are refugees, those without proper employment.

In the gospel story, Jesus says to the man who was deaf: "Ephphatha!"-- "Be opened!" This simple command is a reminder to us also to "be opened." Catholic Social Teaching invites us

to be open to new ways of looking at things, to taking the time to see things from the point of view of those who are poor or in need, and to meeting with and learning from those who are different than ourselves, especially if they are poor or in need. We are called to be open to create something new and more just in our world.

Questions for Reflection in your Faith Sharing Group

Where in our world do you see or experience economic and social inequality?
How are you called to work for healing?

Story

King Pyrrhus of Epirus was approached by his friend Cyneas and asked, "If you conquer Rome, what will you do next, sir?"

Pyrrhus replied, "Sicily is next door and will be easy to take."

"And what shall we do after Sicily is taken?"

"Then we will move over to Africa and sack Carthage."

"And after Carthage, sir?"

"The turn of Greece will come."

"And what, may I ask, will the fruit of all these conquests be?"

"Then," said Pyrrhus, "we can sit down and enjoy ourselves."

"Can we not," said Cyneas, "enjoy ourselves now?"

<http://www.spiritual-short-stories.com/spiritual-short-story-366-King+Pyrrhus+of+Epirus.html>

Actions - Links

Farmworkers

"Farmworker Justice is a nonprofit organization that seeks to empower migrant and seasonal farmworkers to improve their living and working conditions, immigration status, health, occupational safety, and access to justice." <http://farmworkerjustice.org/>

9/11 Remembrance

As we again approach the anniversary of September 11, 2001, we may want to reflect on our efforts to bring a peaceful and nonviolent vision to our world. You might want to look at the sight of September Eleventh Families for Peaceful Tomorrows at <http://www.peacefultomorrow.org/>

Catholics Confront Global Poverty

“The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) call on one million Catholics in the United States to confront global poverty. Advocate with us to end hunger, disease, conflict, and other issues that affect the lives of our brothers and sisters worldwide.” <http://crs.org/globalpoverty/>

“Crazy facts”

The number of deaths caused immediately by the September 11 attacks was 2,977 victims, not counting the 19 hijackers. In addition many others have died later as a result of medical conditions that can be traced to their recovery and rescue work at the sites.

Iraq Body Count (IBC) records between 108,430 and 118,484 civilian deaths from violence between 2003 and today in Iraq. <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/> The number of Iraq Coalition Military Fatalities during Operation Iraqi Freedom was 4804, including 4486 Americans. Some estimates of the number of Iraqi deaths from the invasion number close to 1.5 million people. <http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/iraq>

The number of Afghanistan Coalition Military Fatalities so far in Operation Enduring Freedom / Afghanistan is 3166, including 2107 Americans. <http://icasualties.org/> In addition many others who served in the military have died in suicides.

Prayers of Intersession

Response: Loving God, heal our divisions and make us one.

For those who still do not receive a living wage for their labor, we pray....

For women who are still denied full equality and justice in our world, we pray....

For children who still do not have access to a quality education, we pray....

For all groups of people who are still denied their say in the political life of their land, we pray....

For our nation as we continue the process of electing new leaders, we pray....

For all nations which are still divided by the agony of war and other forms of violence, we pray....

For all the families who still feel the pain of loss after the events of September 11, we pray....

For all who are struggling for an end to war and terrorism and a new justice and peace for all,
we pray....

Prayer - Meditation

A Prayer for the World

Let the rain come and wash away
the ancient grudges, the bitter hatreds
held and nurtured over generations.
Let the rain wash away the memory
of the hurt, the neglect.
Then let the sun come out and
fill the sky with rainbows.
Let the warmth of the sun heal us
wherever we are broken.
Let it burn away the fog so that
we can see each other clearly.
So that we can see beyond labels,
beyond accents, gender or skin color.
Let the warmth and brightness
of the sun melt our selfishness.
So that we can share the joys and
feel the sorrows of our neighbors.
And let the light of the sun
be so strong that we will see all
people as our neighbors.
Let the earth, nourished by rain,
bring forth flowers
to surround us with beauty.
And let the mountains teach our hearts
to reach upward to heaven.
Amen.

—Rabbi Harold S. Kushner
(Author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*)