

The Cost of Discipleship: Paying Attention

Tuesday, February 9, 2010

St. John Fisher Year of Renewal, Week Four

The principles of Catholic Social Teaching evolve from a long tradition of the First and Second Testaments of Sacred Scripture. These principals reiterate the message of scripture that to **“do justice”** is at the center of our responsibility as followers of Jesus. These principles have both a personal and social implications and are an integral part of the process of any decision making.

Principle 1: Human dignity and respect for life

The protection of human dignity and the respect for all life is based on the fundamental principle that **every human being is “created in the image and the likeness of God”**

Some issues linked to this principle:

All the issues of protection of life such as abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment as well as all the issues of wars/just wars, and any kind of violence (torture, etc).

Issues of discrimination such as racism, sexual discrimination, immigration laws based on ethnicity.

Issues of economic injustice which dehumanizes many groups both in our society as well as in the whole world.

Principle 2: Support for all elements of human life: Rights of individuals

Respect for life demands also that all human beings have access to the **“fundamental rights of food, housing, education and health care”**

Some issues linked to this principle:

Health Care proposals, reform of educational system, growing problems of homelessness, hunger and insecurity in large cities

Principle 3: Common Good

Common Good is understood as creating the **“social conditions that allow all people to reach their full human potential”**

Some issues linked to this principle:

Fair and just taxation at the federal level, the issue of a “graduated income tax” in the State of Michigan, a general understanding of sharing wealth for the common good; budget priorities at both State and Federal levels reflecting understanding of the principle of the ‘Common Good’.

Principle 4: Preferential option for the poor and vulnerable

This principle is rooted in the central message of the First and Second Testament of the protection of the poor

Some issues linked to this principle:

National level: reduction of the number of people living below the poverty level, an educational system which serves all, availability of public transportation systems, health care for all, protection of immigrants; At the international level, aid to 3rd world countries (food, health care, development, etc.).

Principle 5: Caring for God’s creation: stewardship of the earth

The goods of the earth are gifts from God and need to be protected for all and for all future generations

Some issues linked to this principle:

All the issues of ecology starting with recycling, and proper use of energy resources to “cap and trade” legislation at the federal level; materialism and over consumption; understanding the interdependence of all creation.

Principle 6: Right and duty to participate in social, economic and political life

It is a right and a duty for all to participate in the social, economic and political decisions in society

Some issues linked to this principle:

Voting rights for all, reform of electoral campaign finances, role of lobbyists in our political system; the duty to vote and make one’s voice heard in the political process

Principle 7: Peace is our constant goal

Peace is not just the absence of wars. It involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations”

Some issues linked to this principle:

Rationale for “just wars” or “preemptive wars”, the arms race and nuclear weapons, violence in all its forms; foreign policies and actions which lead to economic exploitation, marginalization of poor countries; the existence and fueling of national, ethnic and religious hatred; the issue of the primacy of dialogue and negotiation in international relations.

Table Discussion:

Which of these principals, if any, would present a challenge for you in reaching a decision?

Preparation for Panelists:

Fr. Jerry will outline the principals of Conscience Formation for the first segment (for approximately 25 minutes)

Following his talk, participants will be invited to reflect on the above page. When all have had an opportunity to read and reflect, discussion at tables will center on the question at the bottom. (for approximately 25 minutes)

Following the table discussion, the panel will be introduced. Please be prepared to give a brief introduction. You may include information about your family, how long you have been at SJF, your job and ministries that you perform, etc.

Participants at the tables will be invited to offer questions and/or discussion with the panel members. Panel members should be prepared to “share their stories” about how they have engaged in the struggles of making decisions based on the principals of social justice. This is not a time to “tell people what they should do, or how they should think”, but rather, how YOU have engaged in the struggle. In other words, what have been some “doubts” and “rewards” that you have experienced in conscientious decision making.

Fr. Jerry will serve as facilitator for each segment.

At the end of the evening, participants should leave feeling “OK” about not feeling “OK.”