

Social Justice

Core Activity

Catholic Social Teachings

1. Write each of the following column heads on the board: “The Common Good,” “Responsibility of Political Authority,” “Human Dignity,” and “Human Solidarity.”



2. Distribute the handout “Key Concepts Underlying Catholic Social-Justice Teachings” (Document #: TX003199). Alternate the activity between the handout and the board as follows:

- Invite one student to read from the handout the section on the common good. Refer to the part of the board titled “The Common Good,” and ask the students to brainstorm what that phrase might mean in practical terms. Ask them to think of local and global issues. List their responses under the heading on the board.
- Invite one student to read from the handout the section on the responsibility of political authority. Refer to the part of the board titled “Responsibility of Political Authority,” and ask the students to give concrete examples of how the local or the national government, as a political authority, takes responsibility for justice in society. List their examples on the board.
- Invite one student to read from the handout the section on human dignity. Refer to the part of the board titled “Human Dignity,” and ask the students to brainstorm the various ways our culture deprives people of their dignity. List their responses on the board.
- Invite one student to read from the handout the section on human solidarity. Refer to the part of the board titled “Human Solidarity,” and ask the students to brainstorm groups of people who suffer or who deserve better treatment, and whose needs mainstream society might neglect out of ignorance, prejudice, or indifference. List their suggestions on the board.

3. Divide the class into four groups. If the groups have more than eight students, divide them again so that they have from four to eight members. Assign each group one of the four key concepts underlying Catholic social-justice teachings.

4. Ask each group to consult the Bible and find parables told by Jesus that illustrate the key concept of Catholic social-justice teachings that it was assigned. Have each group consider how those Scripture passages connect with the brainstormed list that corresponds with its assigned concept. Explain that each group should be prepared to show and to explain its work at the end of the allotted

time. Allow about 15 minutes for this Scripture search and preparation, and then invite the groups to take turns sharing their findings.

5. Draw the students' attention to any interconnections between their various findings. Conduct a presentation on social justice using key phrases from those findings and from the material on pages 264–267 of *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)*.

6. Close by asking the following question to encourage the students to reflect on ways they can live the four key concepts behind Catholic social-justice teachings: "What one thing have you learned in the activity that you can put into practice in the coming week?"

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Core Activity Extension

Catholic Organizations

Have your students read the Did You Know? article "Catholic Service Organizations for Charity and Justice," on page 266 in the *CFH*, which describes three of the largest Catholic service organizations. Invite your students to explore the Web sites listed in that article, or order brochures to share with them. Have your students discover ways those organizations address the common good, the responsibility of political authority, human dignity, and human solidarity. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Additional Activities

The Social-Justice Two-Step

1. Begin by conducting a brief presentation on the characteristics of service work and of justice work, using the material on page 273 of the *CFH* as your source; be sure to highlight the point that charity and justice are like two feet that walk together in our faith.

2. Invite the students to decide whether they prefer to do primarily service work or justice work. If they are unsure of the difference, point out that service work is anything that eases immediate needs by providing food, comfort, shelter, clothing, and so on, and that justice work is anything that addresses the social structures that contribute to hunger, loneliness, poverty, oppression, or homelessness—from standing up to a group of bullies, to writing a letter to the editor of

the newspaper or to a legislator, to participating at a prayer event at an abortion clinic, to engaging in some kind of boycott or protest.

3. Give an index card of one color to those whose preference is service work, and give an index card of another color to those whose preference is justice work. Invite the students to write on their cards what specific service or justice work they have done or would like to do. If time allows, invite those who are comfortable doing so to share the kind of work they wrote on their cards and why they wrote it.

4. Ask those who prefer service work to think of one work of justice they can do that is related to the service work they enjoy, and to write it on a new card of the justice color. Ask those who prefer justice work to think of one work of service they can do that is related to the justice work they enjoy, and to write it on a new card of the service color.

5. Invite the students to make a commitment to do one act of service and one act of justice in the near future.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Morality* manual.)

Service and Justice in School

Ask the students to think about how their school community promotes the social teaching principles outlined on pages 267–272 of the *CFH*. Ask them to respond, in writing or in class discussion, to the following questions:

- Does the school community emphasize certain principles over others?
- Does it tend to promote those principles primarily through justice or service work?

Have the students work in groups to brainstorm ways the school could strengthen its work for social justice.

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