

Changing the World



SOCIAL JUSTICE KIT

INTRODUCTION TO CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE

Changing the World



Starts with Me

A KIT FOR STARTING AND GROWING A SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP

Jesus had a problem. Despite instructing his apostles for some time they still didn't understand. He had spent the day teaching five thousand and now the apostles still told him to send them away to get something to eat. He replied: "You give them something to eat". (Mark 6:37)

Of course, they had excuses. They didn't have enough food for so many. There were few resources in this barren place. It would cost too much. They had many excuses, but they did not have Faith.

Jesus then showed them, once again, how to act in faith. He collected what they had and asked help from the Father, and then distributed the food so that everybody there had enough to eat. (Cf. Mark 6:30-37)

What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8



Compiled by the Justice, Ecology and Peace Council of the Diocese of Wollongong with thanks to the Macarthur Social Justice Network, Kiama Parish Social Justice Group, and other contributors.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus calls us to open ourselves to God's love, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. In practical terms, and in social terms, this means defending human dignity and human rights, working for justice and peace, and safeguarding creation.

In the Gospel of Luke, *Jesus describes this mission* at the beginning of his ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free. To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. Luke 4: 18 - 19

Action for social justice is an integral part of the *Mission of the Church*. We are inspired and sustained in this work by a spirituality of justice.

As Vatican II made clear, particularly in the document *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church works with the good spirits in the world, helping to transform policies and structures which will advance God's Kingdom.

The Social Justice Kit resources provide a basic guide for *parish social justice groups* including:

- Establishing groups,
- Catholic Social Justice teaching, and
- Resource material

They are a *starting point*. Groups are encouraged to continue researching and learning about the issues as they arise.



WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice is not simply about giving charity to individuals in need, but rather it is about social action that will bring about justice within our community, so that all those in need are cared for.

“Justice is about fairness. Social justice in particular concerns the relationships between different groups in society.

It examines whether everyone receives what is due to them in fairness or not.

In a just Christian society the needs, interests or perspectives of some groups are not privileged while those of others are neglected: all have an equal voice, and the poor are given preferential treatment.

We need to examine *how* the processes and institutions of our society operate, how we allocate resources, and how power and privilege are distributed. We need to look at the economic, social, cultural and political systems of our society.

This leads us to ask: Do all of these systems *respect human dignity* and promote the common good.

Every group in society should take into account the rights and aspirations of other groups, and *the wellbeing of the whole human family*, rather than just looking out for itself.

All of us should be able to live in a dignified manner.”

www.faithdoingjustice.com.au/catholic-social-teaching/introduction.html

POPE FRANCIS:

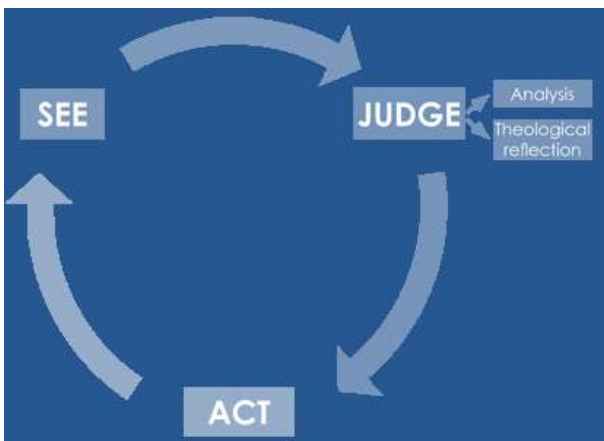
**“No to an economy of Exclusion.
No to the new idolatry of money.
No to a financial system which rules
rather than serves”** November 24 2013

**A METHOD FOR ACTION**

Finding a path for action can often be a difficult task.

Issues are deeply interrelated and have *multiple elements* that impact on one another.

A *model* through which to approach issues and find a response within your community is **SEE JUDGE ACT**.

**SEE**

See is the process of *identifying issues*. It means experiencing the lived reality of individuals and communities, naming what is happening that causes you concern,



and then carefully and intentionally examining the situation.

- What are *the people* in this situation doing, feeling, and saying?
- What is *happening* to them and how do you and they respond?

The following questions may be helpful:

- *What do you know* about this issue or what did you observe?
- What *specific facts* can you cite about this issue or experience?
- What did you *learn* or observe?
- How do you *feel* in the face of this issue or experience?
- How does it *touch you personally*?

JUDGE

Judge is used in a positive sense - to analyse the situation and make an *informed judgement* about it.

This has two important stages: **social analysis and theological reflection**.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Social analysis helps us *obtain a more complete picture* of the social situation by exploring its historical and structural relationships.

We attempt to *make sense* of what we observed in the “SEE” stage.

We ask *why this situation exists* and what the root causes are.

To answer these questions we need to examine:



Economic factors: Who owns? Who controls? Who pays? Who wins? Why?

Political factors: Who decides? For whom do they decide? How do decisions get made? Who is left out of the process? Why?

Social factors: Who is left out? Who is included? Why?

Historical factors: What past events influence the situation today?

Cultural factors: What values are evident? What do people believe in? Who influences what people believe?

Social analysis assists us in naming the *heart of the matter* which we then take to the next stage, a profoundly important one: theological reflection.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Theological reflection explores the issue with the help of our Christian spirituality.

From this we gain *new insight and meaning*.

Two important sources of this are the *Scriptures and Catholic Social Teaching*.

Questions to ask are:

1. How do they serve as a *measuring stick* for this experience?
2. What *scripture passages* can help us?

3. How does Jesus' example and teaching help us to see this reality in a different way?
4. What does *Catholic social teaching* say about this issue?
5. What *key principles* from this teaching apply to this situation?

Insights from the theological reflection lead to *ideas for action*.

ACT

Planning and carrying out actions are concerned with *transforming personal attitudes and social structures* that contribute to suffering and injustice.

From your Seeing, Analysis and Theological Reflection (Judging) you can decide what action needs to be taken to *change the situation*.

If no action is clear, you may need to consider *additional research*.



Figure 3 - Sydney Alliance Meeting, Punchbowl Boys High School

Some questions for considering action include:

- *How would you transform* the structures and relationships that produce this situation?
- *How can you act* to empower those who are disadvantaged in this situation?



Figure 2 - Koramangala Slum Centre, Bangalore

Once you have decided upon a broad action area, the following questions will help *clarify and develop* the action:

- What is the *aim for the action* - what do you want to see happening?
- *Who* will be involved in the action?
- What is the realistic *timeframe* for action?
- Are there *smaller actions* within the broad action - timeline for these steps?
- How will you *evaluate the effectiveness* of your action?

Adapted from "Reading the Signs of the Times: A Basic Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching" by John Ferguson, Helen Kearins and David Brennan. Published by the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, 2011

EXERCISE:

- In your Group, discuss what is meant by "Social Justice".
- What are the key steps in analysing social justice issues?
- How is the method here especially "Catholic" or "Christian"?
- Jot down a few local issues that come immediately to mind
- Think about how you might begin to analyse these using the method described earlier

NOTES: _____



Figure 3 - Darling River, Bourke NSW



POPE FRANCIS:

“The times talk to us of so much poverty in the world and this is a scandal. Poverty in the world is a scandal. In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an education, so many poor persons. Poverty today is a cry.”

July 6 2013



DEVELOPING A SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP

Whilst the work for justice is the role of all the baptised, it is often necessary for that call to be *animated and energised by a smaller group* of committed and enthusiastic people who are able to research, discuss, direct and promote work on various aspects of the work of social justice within their community.

START

Talk with your *Parish Priest and Parish Pastoral Council* about the desire to establish a social justice group within the

parish. Their support will be essential for the success of the ministry.

Through both personal invitation and parish notices, *advertise an initial meeting* of people who might be interested in becoming more active in the work of social justice within the community.

You may like to use this box as a checklist of people you need to speak with about starting the group.

Parish Priest: _____

Assistants: _____

Pastoral Council Members:

Possible Participants:





Figure 4 - Social Justice Statement Launch, ACU North Sydney

MEET

The first gathering is for people to *get to know each other*, their specific interests in the area of social justice and what gifts and skills they may bring to such a group.

This gathering would *agree* upon:

- The *need* for such a group
- A brief *vision or purpose* for the group. Will it be an issue specific group or one that is open to a broad range of issues?
- Broad *operating guidelines* for the group, especially times for future meetings.

GROW

Provide some *formational opportunities* for the group as they begin to develop. The resources in the remainder of this package would be a good place to start.

Agree on a *focus for the group*, choose two or three principle areas of importance towards which the group can work on developing. The field of social justice can be overwhelming and thus it is vital to gain a focus for the group in order to maintain the energy and enthusiasm.

VISION:

REGULAR MEETING DAY/TIME:

NOTES:

CONNECT

Connect with other parish, regional and diocesan groups as a way of developing issues and *touching in with the broader work of justice* in the community.

Consider what the *significant annual events are in this area*.

LOCAL EVENTS:



