Jr. High School IGNITE
Lesson Plan 4
Catholic Social Teaching
October 6, 2013

If you want to change the world, start with yourself – St. Francis of Assisi

Preach the Gospel Always: When Necessary Use Words. – St. Francis of Assisi

Objectives

- Building off of last week’s Respect Lesson now we focus on putting that respect into action.
- To inform teens about their responsibility to live Catholic Social Teachings.
- To examine what this call to act justly means in terms of social justice in the world today.
- To raise teens’ awareness that Sacred Scripture calls us to act justly.

Overview

1) Meet in the Church after Hospitality for Prayer and Announcements.
2) Attendance is taken in the classroom and collected from a Teen Faith representative at 6:00pm. Please leave sheet outside the classroom door for pick up.
3) Read the Scripture readings and the questions provided for discussion.

EVERY CLASS SHOULD HAVE:

- SHARED EXPERIENCE BY ADULT LEADER, PEER MINISTERS AND STUDENTS
- SCRIPTURE READING
- SHARED INSIGHTS (THEOLOGY/CATECHESIS)
- FAITH IN ACTION
  (Challenge for the Week)
Social Justice—Catholic Social Teaching Matthew 25:37-40

“We cannot separate action for justice from the proclamation of the Word of God.”

What does this mean? Think this idea is radical? Jesus taught this principle over 2000 years ago! In his Parable of the Last Judgment, Jesus made it abundantly clear that faith in him will be judged by how well that faith was put into action:

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink?

And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee?

And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?"

And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:37-40, RSV)

In other words, we are called to be people for others. But what does this mean in practical terms? How do we translate faith into action? To guide us in this endeavor, the bishops of the United States wrote Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions, which outlines seven principles of social justice in Catholic teaching. By following these principles, we will discover how to live as people for others.

- **Dignity of the Human Person.** We are called to ask whether our actions as a society respect or threaten the life and dignity of the human person.
- **Call to Family, Community, and Participation.** We are called to support the family—the principle social institution—so that people can participate in society, build a community spirit, and promote the well being of all.
- **Rights and Responsibilities.** We are called to protect the rights that all people have to those things required for a decent human life, such as food, clothing, and shelter.
- **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable.** We are called to pay special attention to the needs of those who are poor.
- **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers.** We are called to protect the basic rights of all workers: the right to engage in productive work, fair wages, private property, and the right to organize, join unions, and pursue economic opportunity.
- **Solidarity.** We are called to recognize that, because God is our Father, we are all brothers and sisters, with the responsibility to care for one another.
- **Care for God’s Creation.** We are called to care for all that God has made.

In the Parable of the Last Judgment, Jesus makes clear our responsibility to tend to the needs of others. The Church teaches this responsibility in these seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching reminding us that, if we want to live as followers of Jesus, we need to live as people for others.
CATECHIST BACKGROUND

Who among us is called to serve?  

In this passage Jesus knew his death was coming so he washes the feet of his disciples. The master serves the servant. This is another great way to show Jesus turning our expectations on end. If we are to be like Jesus we are to serve. Being Catholic and practicing our social teaching does not always mean speaking or teaching or voting but as Jesus does here using our hands and feet to serve.

Love God and love your neighbor as yourself.  

All the moral teachings of the Catholic Church are rooted in these two commandments. How do people become just? We will be just to others only when we recognize, respect, and respond to their value and dignity as human beings. It is easy to be unjust to another person or to a class of people. All we have to do is decide that they are without value and dignity and that we can do with them whatever we want. Such thinking led to the horror of the Holocaust in World War II.

We are made in the image and likeness of God.  

Because every human being is made in the image and likeness of God, each person has infinite value. Our relationship with God calls us to be in right relationship with the beings he created in his image and likeness, that is, other people!

Injustices such as racism, ageism and discrimination against the handicapped say that some people deserve nothing because they are nothing. Injustice says that many people do not matter at all. But justice—the justice that God desires—constantly reminds us that all people matter.

Justice depends on affirming the value of each person. What exactly is justice? Justice is the virtue that guides our relationships with all people. Justice makes sure that we respect the dignity of all human beings and honor their rights. Why should the needs of others matter to us? Our faith reminds us that we are a human family. The virtue of justice demands that we seek the common good for this family.

Questions and discussions

1) What did St. Francis mean when he said "Preach the Gospel always if necessary use words"? What do we say to others when were not using our words? Do our actions really speak louder than words?
2) Ask if they or someone they know has used a racial slur or really talked poorly of another person in recent conversations. How do they feel when they hear that type of language? How has the media desensitized us to negative words and actions? Can programs have a good message but use inappropriate language?
3) Why should the needs of others matter to us? Why should we care that another family has barely enough to eat if we have enough for ourselves? Are we affected by others?
4) Have you ever thought about how difficult it is for a fellow student who is hungry, or who dresses in clothes that are not “in style” because of his/her parental status in the community?

5) Have you ever thought of the many obstacles some of your classmates face every day because they may be “different”?

6) St. Francis of Assisi said, “If you want to change the world, start with yourself.” What do you think he meant? How can you change the world?

Group discussion on Scripture.

**Galatians 3:26-29 who is Equal?** *It is through faith that all of you are God’s children in union with Christ Jesus. You were baptized into union with Christ, and now you are clothed, so to speak, with the life of Christ himself. So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in the union with Christ Jesus.*

Explanation of Scripture

Sometimes in the Old Testament, some people are treated better than others. Men had more freedom and privileges than women. People who were wealthy enough to own slaves thought God favored them over all other people.

Jesus’ message of equality and his new commandment to love one another changed that thinking. His message that all people are equally loved by God was scary to the Jews who had been living with the Old Law. Paul had to remind the Galatians that his teaching about faith, and not the Old Law his opponents were trying to bring back, was the truth revealed by Jesus. Paul reminded the Galatians that equality was one of the cornerstones of Jesus’ message. Paul’s list included gender (man and woman), religion (Jews and Gentiles), and status (free or slave).

Questions for discussion

1) What categories would Paul write about if he looked at society today?
2) What possible role models are there in our media/society of people who are poor, sick, imprisoned, or mentally handicapped?
3) What does Paul mean when he says, “You were baptized into union with Christ, and now you are clothed in the life of Christ himself” and “you are all one in union with Christ Jesus.” Ask teens if they have any ideas of what Paul was referring to?
Activities

Do Actions speak louder than words?

OK
Have everyone make an OK sign with their hand. The facilitator demonstrates what to do. As you are giving the instructions, ask them to put that OK sign on their chin, meanwhile you place that OK sign on your cheek. This is a wonderful example of how people will follow what you do, rather than what you say.

*John 13:15* I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.  
*I Cor 11:1* follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.  
*I Tim 4:11-12* Command and teach these things. Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

1,2,3 Go
Have everyone hold their hands out in front of them like they are about to clap. Again, demonstrate this behavior for them. As you are giving the instructions, instruct them to clap their hands when you say the word, “Go.” Count out loud, “1..... 2..... 3..... (clap your hands when you say 3) Then say “Go!” Several people will clap when you clap, rather than when you say Go.

*Titus 2:7-8* In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.  
*2 Peter 2:21* To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.
**Pokerface**

Give each participant a playing card, ask them not to look at it and put the card to their forehead. This is a non talking game, so they do not have the resource of their voice. Ask participants to treat each other based on the face value of their card. It’s amazing to watch the royalty cards get bowed to and the “2” cards get pushed away and treated poorly. Middle cards usually get ignored or treated indifferently. After a few minutes of milling around, ask them to place themselves in areas of the room designated by low cards, medium cards and high cards.

**Debriefing:**

Start with the low cards. Ask them, “What types of behaviors were demonstrated to you that led you to believe you had a low card?” Then ask the same question to the middle cards. Then ask the same question to the high cards.

For the next round of questions, start with the high cards. Ask them, “Once you realized you had a high card did it influence the way you played the game?” Usually it does. Somehow once being put into a position of power or authority, it gives people “permission” to be dismissive of others or downright mean! Then ask the same question of the middle cards. Then ask the same question of the low cards. Lower cards have the tendency to back out of the activity after a few people treat them poorly. This is a great metaphor of inclusion and the willingness to participate after negative interactions occur.

Topics for discussion: Great for discussion on who places value on you. If you were running a race wouldn’t you rather be 2nd than 10th? God loves each of us the same! We should not treat people differently based on looks, how much money they make, social status, etc. What happens when people feel left out? How invested in your program will people be if they feel unwelcome or treated poorly?

**I Peter 2:17** Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

**I Cor 12:21-27** The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given the greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.