

***Everyday Christianity:  
to Hunger & Thirst for Justice***

[from a statement of the U. S. Catholic bishops,  
[www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/everyday.htm](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/everyday.htm)]

How do we connect worship on Sunday to work on Monday? How is the Gospel proclaimed not only in the pulpits of our parishes but also in the everyday lives of Catholic people? How does the church gathered on the Sabbath act as the people of God scattered and active every day of the week? How can we best carry the values of our faith into family life, the marketplace and the public square? How do we love our neighbor, pursue peace and seek justice in everyday choices and commitments?

Catholics are called by God to protect human life, to promote human dignity, to defend the poor and to seek the common good. This social mission of the church belongs to all of us. It is an essential part of what it means to be a believer.

This social mission is advanced in many ways: by the prophetic teaching of our Holy Father; by the efforts of our bishops' conference; and by the many structures of charity and justice within our community of faith. But the most common and in many ways the most important Christian witness is often neither very visible nor highly structured. It is the sacrifice of parents trying to raise children with concern for others; the service and creativity of workers who do their very best and reach out to those in need; the struggle of business owners trying to reconcile the bottom line and the needs of employees and customers; and the hard choices of public officials who seek to protect the weak and pursue the common good. The church's social mission is advanced by teachers and scientists, by family farmers and corporate executives.

The Catholic social mission is also carried forward by believers who join unions, neighborhood organizations, business groups,

civic associations, the pro-life movement, groups working for justice, or environmental, civil rights or peace groups. It is advanced by Christians who stand up for the values of the Gospel. This mission is the task of countless Christians living their faith without much fanfare or recognition who are quietly building a better society by their choices and actions day by day.

Christian discipleship means practicing what Jesus preached. Discipleship is found in a relationship with Christ and a commitment to his mission of "bringing good news to the poor, liberty to captives, new sight to the blind and setting the downtrodden free."

For Catholics, this takes on special meaning today. According to the Second Vatican Council, "It is the special vocation of the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. They live in the world, in each and every one of the world's occupations and callings, and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life. There they are called by God to contribute to the sanctification of the world within, like leaven, in the spirit of the Gospel, by fulfilling their own particular duties."

Catholicism does not call us to abandon the world, but to shape it. This does not mean leaving worldly tasks and responsibilities but transforming them. Our entire community of faith must help Catholics to be instruments of God's grace and creative power in business and politics, factories and offices, in homes and schools, and in all the events of daily life. Social justice and the common good are built up or torn down day by day in the countless decisions and choices we make. This vocation to pursue justice is not simply an individual task—it is a call to work with others to humanize and shape the institutions that touch so many people.

Our **families** are the starting point and the center of a vocation for justice. How we treat our parents, spouses and children is a

reflection of our commitment to Christ's love and justice. We demonstrate our commitment to the Gospel by how we spend our time and money, and whether our family life includes an ethic of charity, service and action for justice. The lessons we teach our children through what we do as well as what we say determine whether they care for the "least among us" and are committed to work for justice.

**Workers** are called to pursue justice. In the Catholic tradition work is not a burden, not just how we make a living. Work is a way of supporting our family, realizing our dignity, promoting the common good and participating in God's creation. This means often doing the ordinary well, making the most of our talents and opportunities, treating others fairly and with dignity, and working with integrity and creativity.

**Owners, managers and investors** face important opportunities to seek justice and pursue peace. Ethical responsibility is not just avoiding evil but doing right, especially for the weak and vulnerable. Decisions about the use of capital have moral implications. Are they creating and preserving quality jobs at living wages? Are they building up community through the goods and services they provide? Do policies and decisions reflect respect for human life and dignity, promote peace and preserve God's creation? While economic returns are important, they should not take precedence over the rights of workers or protection of the environment.

As **consumers**, believers can promote social justice or injustice. In an affluent culture that suggests that what we have defines who we are, we can live more simply. When we purchase goods and services, we can choose to support companies that defend human life, treat workers fairly, protect creation and respect other basic moral values at home and abroad.

All human beings have unique talents, gifts from God that we are called to develop and share. We should celebrate this

diversity. People who use their skills and expertise for the common good, the service of others and the protection of creation are **good stewards** of the gifts they have been given. When we labor with honesty, serve those in need, work for justice and contribute to charity, we use our talents to show our love—and God's love—for our brothers and sisters.

As **citizens** in the world's leading democracy, Catholics in the United States have special responsibilities to protect human life and dignity and to stand with those who are poor and vulnerable. We are also called to welcome the stranger, to combat discrimination, to pursue peace and to promote the common good. Catholic social teaching calls us to practice civic virtues. We cannot be indifferent to or cynical about the obligations of citizenship. Our political choices should not reflect simply our own interests, partisan preferences or ideological agendas, but should be shaped by the principles of our faith and our commitment to justice, especially to the weak and vulnerable. The voices and votes of Catholics are needed to shape a society with greater respect for human life, economic and environmental justice, cultural diversity and global solidarity. Catholic involvement in public life and legislative advocacy is an important way to exercise responsible citizenship. Participation in politics is a worthy vocation and a public trust.

The pursuit of justice is an essential part of the Catholic call to holiness, which is our true vocation: to live "in Christ" and let Christ live and work in us in our world today.

Christian faith requires conversion; it changes who we are, what we do and how we think. The Gospel offers "good news" and guidance not just for our spiritual lives, but for all the commitments and duties which make up our lives. Living our faith in the ordinary tasks of everyday life is an essential part of what it means to be holy today.