

# GRIST

Diocese of New Ulm      Social Concerns Office      August & September, 2008

## VII. Act Justly

The community of believers were of one heart and one mind. None of them ever claimed anything as his own; rather, everything was held in common...Nor was there anyone needy among them, for all who owned property or houses sold them and donated the proceeds. They used to lay them at the feet of the apostles to be distributed to everyone according to his need.      *Acts of the Apostles 4: 32, 34, 35*

Nature has poured forth all things for the common use of all people. And God has ordained that all things should be produced that there might be food in common for all, and that the earth should be the common possession of all. Nature created common rights, but usurpation has transformed them into private rights...God gave the same earth to be cultivated by all. Since, therefore, His bounty is common, how is it that you have so many fields, and your neighbor not even a clod of earth?

*St. Ambrose*

Great is the good fortune of a state in which the citizens have a moderate and sufficient property.

*Aristotle*

Seek as much as God has given you, and from that take as much as is necessary; the superfluities of the rich are the necessities of the poor. Those who possess superfluities, possess the goods of others...Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies. For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms.

*St. Augustine*

Everything owned by those who have more than their individual due of society's goods, is theft and usurpation.      *Francois-Noel Babeuf*

Money is like muck, not good except it be spread.

*Francis Bacon*

Poverty is an anomaly to rich people. It is very difficult to make out why people who want dinner do not ring the bell.

*Walter Bagehot*

I know that God has given us the use of goods, but only as far as is necessary; and He has determined that the use be common. It is absurd and disgraceful for one to live magnificently and luxuriously when so many are hungry...The bread that you store up belongs to the hungry; the cloak that lies in your chest belongs to the naked; the gold that you have hidden in the ground belongs to the poor.

*St. Basil the Great*

Conservatives say if you don't give the rich more money, they will lose their incentive to invest. As for the poor, they tell us they've lost all incentive because we've given them too much money.

*George Carlin*

One must always be just before one can be generous, as one must have shirts before one can have lace.

*Chamfort*

The poor have been rebels but they never have been anarchists; they have more interest than anyone else in there being some decent government; the poor man really has a stake in the country. The rich man hasn't; he can go to New Guinea in a yacht. The poor have sometimes objected to being governed badly; the rich have always objected to being governed at all.

*G. K. Chesterton*

Private property is the fruit of iniquity. I know that God has given us the use of goods, but only as far as is necessary; and he has determined that the use shall be common. The use of all things

that are found in this world ought to be common to all men. Only the most manifest iniquity makes one say to another, “This belongs to me, that to you.” Hence the origin of contention among men. *Clement of Alexandria*

The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread. *Anatole France*

Under communism, man exploits man.  
Under capitalism, it’s just the opposite. *John Kenneth Galbraith*

No matter how noble the objectives of a government, if it blurs decency and kindness, cheapens human life, and breeds ill will and suspicion – it is an evil government. *Eric Hoffer*

Which things, tell me, are yours? Whence have you brought your goods into life? You are like one occupying a place in a theater, who should prohibit others from entering, treating that as his own which was designed for the common use of all...Do you wish to honor the Body of Christ? Do not ignore him when he is naked. Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk, only then to neglect him outside where he is cold and ill-clad. He who said: “This is my Body” is the same who said: “You saw me hungry and you gave me no food,” and “Whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did also for me.” What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with gold chalices when your brother is dying of hunger? Start satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well. *St. John Chrysostom*

I have found men more kind than I expected, and less just...A decent provision for the poor is the true test of a civilization. *Samuel Johnson*

What kind of person do you want to be? Put negatively, the question is, what kind of behavior makes you feel small and ashamed? Usually it is some form of inauthenticity. It is

when you feel like a fake, a fraud. That is what a cheater is. And even small deceptions unfold into a way of life, of pretending, of looking good, of dreading the truth. In every consequent deception, I become the kind of person I am now choosing. A commitment to honesty, even in small things, yields a growing knowledge of one’s true self. Only on the basis of that truth can one be loved – not only by oneself, but by anyone else. *John F. Kavanaugh, S.J.*

There are people who are followed all through their lives by a beggar to whom they have given nothing. *Karl Kraus*

Whereas it has been known and declared that the poor have no right to the property of the rich, I wish it also to be known and declared that the rich have no right to the property of the poor. *John Ruskin*

To robbery, slaughter, plunder they give the lying name of empire; they make a desert and call it peace. *Tacitus*

Property is not theft, but a good deal of theft becomes property. *Richard Henry Tawney*

I sit on a man’s back, choking him and making him carry me, and yet assure myself and others that I am very sorry for him and wish to lighten his load by all possible means – except by getting off his back. *Leo Tolstoy*

What is it sacrilege to destroy? The *metaxu*. No human being should be deprived of his *metaxu*, that is to say, of those relative and mixed blessings (home, country, traditions, culture, etc.) which warm and nourish the soul and without which, short of sainthood, a *human* life is impossible. *Simone Weil*

I think it’s wrong that only one company makes the game *Monopoly*. *Steve Wright*

If the rich could hire other people to die for them, the poor could make a wonderful living. *Yiddish Proverb*