

PARISH SOCIAL MISSION AND MINISTRY

[from *Communities of Salt & Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish*, a statement of the U. S. Catholic bishops, www.usccb.org/sdwp/saltandlight.htm]

1. Social justice is an integral part of evangelization, a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel and an essential part of the church's social mission.
2. The pursuit of justice and peace is an essential part of what makes a parish Catholic.
3. There has been a tremendous growth of education, outreach, advocacy and organizing in parishes. But in some parishes, the social justice dimensions of parish life are still neglected, underdeveloped or touch only a few parishioners.
4. We need to build local communities of faith where our social teaching is central, not fringe; where social ministry is integral, not optional; where it is the work of every believer, not just the mission of a few committed people and committees.
5. When social mission and ministry is an integral part of the entire parish, it is woven into every aspect of parish life: worship, formation and action.
6. Worship that does not reflect the Lord's call to conversion, service and justice can become pious ritual and empty of the Gospel.
7. Preaching that ignores the social dimensions of our faith does not truly reflect the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
8. Our social doctrine must also be an essential part of the curriculum and life of our schools, religious education programs, sacramental preparation and Christian initiation activities.
9. Our parishes need to encourage, support and sustain lay people in living their faith in the family, neighborhood, marketplace and public arena. The most challenging work for justice is not done in church committees, but in the secular world of work, family life and citizenship.
10. Parishes are called to reach out to the hurting, the poor and vulnerable in our midst in concrete acts of charity.
11. Catholic social teaching calls us to change the structures which deny people their dignity and rights as children of God. Service and action, charity and justice are complementary components of parish social ministry. Neither alone is sufficient; both are essential signs of the Gospel at work.
12. Parishes need to promote a revived sense of political responsibility calling Catholics to be informed and active citizens, participating in the debate over the values and vision that guide our communities and nation.

Assessing Parish Social Ministry

Anchoring Social Ministry: Prayer & Worship

1. In what ways does our parish worship reflect Christ's call to conversion, to service, and to working for justice?
2. During the liturgy, in what ways is the gospel's call to build peace, work for justice, and care for the poor regularly reflected in the general intercessions, in homilies, in our celebrations of special feast days and holidays, and at other appropriate times?
3. How do our sacramental celebrations help us renew our commitment to reconciliation throughout our lives and rededicate ourselves to Jesus' message of love and justice, especially for those in need?
4. What opportunities for prayer, scripture study, and reflection on our Christian vocation does our parish offer? How is our social mission incorporated into these activities?
5. In what ways are our social ministry efforts clearly rooted in Scripture and spirituality, and connected to liturgy and prayer?

Sharing the Message: Preaching & Education

1. How effectively does preaching at our parish reflect the social dimensions of our faith?
2. In what ways is our rich heritage of Catholic social teaching integrated into: our school curriculum; our religious education program; our sacramental preparation program; our Christian initiation ministry; our ongoing religious formation and enrichment for adults?

Supporting the "Salt of the Earth": Family, Work, Citizenship

1. Sustaining Christian marriage and shaping family life around gospel values can be difficult in our culture. What concrete and practical support does our parish offer to: married couples and to those preparing for marriage (counsel, retreats, small faith communities); parents (parenting skills workshops, support groups)?
2. An important opportunity for living our faith is through our work, in everyday decisions and actions, in the way we treat co-workers and customers. How does our parish support our members in practicing Christian values in the workplace?
3. In what ways are parishioners providing leadership in unions, community groups, professional associations,

and political organizations? How does our parish support them as they live their faith in these leadership roles?

Serving the "Least of These": Outreach & Charity

1. In what ways is our parish serving those in need?
2. How do parishioners become aware of these opportunities for service and action?
3. How effectively have we involved our parish community in our social efforts?
4. What direction do our service programs provide to our parish efforts in advocacy—in changing the conditions that create poverty and suffering?

Advocating for Justice: Legislative Action

1. How does our parish help parishioners become better informed on public policy issues that affect the poor and vulnerable?
2. In what ways do we encourage our members to become more active citizens, exercising their right to vote and participating in public life?
3. What opportunities does our parish provide for parishioners to speak and act effectively in the public arena on behalf of the poor and vulnerable, to bring our values to debates about local, national, and international priorities?
4. How effectively have we involved our parish community in advocacy efforts?

Creating Community: Organizing for Justice

1. What community organizations exist in our local community or diocese?
2. How is our parish participating in or supporting such efforts?

Building Solidarity: Beyond Parish Boundaries

1. In what ways does our parish provide to our members information about the needs of our brothers and sisters, especially the poor and vulnerable, in other lands?
2. What links does our parish have to people, parishes, or others groups around the globe?
3. What opportunities does our parish offer us to act in solidarity on international