

Session Five Handout: To Protect and Seek Justice

Opening Prayer

Jesus, you teach us to love and care for one another. Sometimes this is easy, and at other times we struggle with that that means and what that looks like today. Give us strength and humility as we continue to learn to love and care for everyone, especially our fellow children of God who are hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned. Amen.

Just as You Did it to the Least of These, You Did it to Me

Matthew 25:31-40

³¹ ‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, ‘‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’’ ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, ‘‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’’

Reflection:

- What stands out for you in this reading?
- Who are the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned?
- Can you give examples of when/how we have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, given clothing to those without, cared for the sick, or visited those in prison?
- How do we do these things in our local community? In our state? In our country?

To Protect and Seek Justice

WE BELIEVE how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner is how we treat Christ himself. (Matthew 25: 31-46) ‘‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’’ God calls us to protect and seek justice for those who are poor and vulnerable, and our treatment of people who are ‘‘oppressed,’’ ‘‘strangers,’’ ‘‘outsiders,’’ or otherwise considered ‘‘marginal’’ is a test of our relationship to God, who made us all equal in divine dignity and love. Our proclamation of the lordship of Jesus Christ is at stake in our solidarity with the most vulnerable. If our gospel is not ‘‘good news to the poor,’’ it is not the gospel of Jesus Christ (Luke 4:18).

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the language and policies of political leaders who would debase and abandon the most vulnerable children of God. We strongly deplore the growing attacks on immigrants and refugees, who are being made into cultural and political targets, and we need to remind our churches that God makes the treatment of the ‘‘strangers’’ among us a test of faith (Leviticus 19:33-34). We won’t accept the neglect of the well-being of low-income families and children, and we will resist repeated attempts to deny health care to those who most need it. We confess our growing national sin of putting the rich over the poor. We reject the immoral logic of cutting services and programs for the poor while cutting taxes for the rich. Budgets are moral documents. We commit ourselves to opposing and reversing those policies and finding solutions that reflect the wisdom of people from different political parties and philosophies to seek the

common good. Protecting the poor is a central commitment of Christian discipleship, to which 2,000 verses in the Bible attest.

Closing Prayer

Read in unison

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is discord, union;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

(Prayer attributed to St. Francis)