

What does it mean to work for social justice?

It is important to realize that working for social justice takes more than simply dropping off a few canned goods at the food pantry around Christmas time. Choosing justice should be a choice to work for changes that provide long-term solutions, not just making something better for the moment. That is the difference.

Seven Principles of Social Mission

Within the Catholic understanding of justice, there are seven underlying principles that may help you recognize situations that you would like to see changed.

1. Dignity of the human person—All people are sacred.
2. Call to community and participation—The human person is a social being, one part of the human family.
3. Rights and responsibilities—All people have fundamental rights and a responsibility to respect those rights in others.
4. Option for the poor—Society's most vulnerable members must be treated with equality.
5. Dignity of work—People have the right to work and earn fair wages.
6. Solidarity—We are one human family called to work for justice.
7. Care for God's creation—We have the responsibility to care for the goods of the earth as gifts from God.

Here are some grade level activities that will:

- Help raise the young people's awareness of certain social issues
 - Provide an opportunity for youth to integrate a sense of God's justice into their own lives
 - Encourage the young people to participate in a process of long term change for the common good of all.
1. Invite the young people to research social service agencies in your local community. Ask them to compile a report listing the agencies, their purpose or mission, who they serve, and how people can become involved. The youth can publish what they find as a resource for the parish and school community. Invite guest speakers from a few of these agencies to talk with your students about what they do.
 2. Have students complete an Internet search for "Catholic social justice." Ask them to find sites which are resources for learning more about the Church's teachings on social justice and responsibility. Help them sift through the information. Then ask them to summarize the "best of" sites they find.