

Social Justice Sunday Liturgy Notes

September 28, 2003

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Social Justice Sunday Statement 2003

A Generous Heart in the Love of Christ: Challenging Racism in Australia Today

Overview: In Australia, as in other nations, there have always been groups whom people have found it difficult to welcome and easy to exclude. Such relationships of welcome and exclusion – between the first Australians and white settlers, then later, between white Australians and people of other races and among old settlers and immigrants after World War II – eventually moved us towards a multicultural Australia where people were able to accept the challenge of living in a diverse society in which respect for persons demands respect for their cultures.

Yet racism continues to exist in Australia, for we live in a time of national and international divisiveness and bitterness, often based on racial and religious differences. The challenge for us as Catholics is to recognise the dignity of every human person, and to welcome and accept all cultural and ethnic groups. The positive experience of multiculturalism in this country can assist us to continue to welcome with a generous heart the refugees and immigrants who come to our land.

Liturgy Notes

The following notes may be of use to link 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time with Social Justice Sunday 2003, remembering that while the Church invites us to set aside a particular Sunday each year with a social justice focus, the fact is that each Sunday should challenge us to recognise the Christ of the altar in the social outcast of our society. An early church tradition over many centuries named the poor widows and orphans of the community "the altar of Christ". People in need were directly identified with the Christ who suffered and died for the liberation of all peoples. Christians have always been invited to unite their daily sacrifices to the sacrifice of Christ remembered each Sunday at the Eucharistic table. This is symbolised in the bread and wine and the collection that is symbolic of their sacrifice becoming one with that of Christ.

The New General Instruction of the Roman Missal (2000) states:

"It is desirable for the faithful's participation to be expressed by an offering, whether of the bread and wine for the celebration of the Eucharist or of other gifts that assist the needs of the Church and of the poor." (140)

On this Sunday the assembly could be invited to make a special effort to better represent their sacrifice by seriously giving either money or other goods to alleviate the suffering of the "altar of Christ". It would be important therefore that these gifts accompany the bread and wine in procession and are presented to the priest together with the bread and wine so that they will be identified as part of the sacrifice being celebrated.

Readings

The Readings for 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time can be linked with the concept of social justice. Being committed to social justice is about living in relationship with God and living a life of influence for good. It is about recognising and respecting the human dignity of all people.

Numbers 11: 25-29

Joshua complains to Moses that the gift of prophecy had been given to many. Moses does not take offence, but wishes that all the people would prophesy.

Psalms 18: 8, 10, 12-14

Response: The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.

James 5: 1- 6

James speaks harsh words to those who are wealthy, living in comfort and luxury, and unwilling to share their wealth with those in need.

Mark 9: 38-43, 45, 47-48

True disciples of Jesus will follow him without compromise, eradicating from their lives any cause of sin.

Homily Notes

Perhaps the greatest cause of division is dwelling on one another's differences. On the cross, Jesus' outstretched arms embraced all. All human beings are equal in God's sight, making it wrong to discriminate against people on the basis of nationality, race or religion. Jesus Christ is more than any particular culture, social movement, political party or religious affiliation.

The Spirit can gift all people of good will, including those who do not know Jesus Christ or who do not recognise him as the Son of God. Moses wished that all the people would prophesy. Similarly, Jesus is not offended by people working miracles in his name.

Wealth is condemned if it is the fruit of injustice. As Christians, we are stewards of our gifts and our possessions, ready to share what we have with others. As Australians, we are stewards of a nation blessed with freedom and rich in resources and opportunities.

Can we share our country with immigrants and refugees? With people who do not look like us? With persons of other faiths?

We can all take small, effective steps to help strangers find a welcome in our neighbourhood, our parish, our Catholic schools and our local communities. God's greatness of heart invites and challenges us to respond with a generous heart.

Prayer of the Faithful

One or two of the following could be added.

We pray for the people of Australia.

May they be generous in their response to the stranger seeking refuge in Australia.

We pray for Australia

That it may continue to be blessed with freedom, good leadership and responsible citizens.

We pray for all Australians

That we may continue to welcome with a generous heart the refugees and immigrants who come to our land.

The Eucharistic Prayer

- For Masses for various needs and occasions: D. Jesus the Compassion of God
- For Reconciliation I
- For Reconciliation II

For the Parish Bulletin: This is Social Justice Sunday

To mark this occasion, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has produced the Social Justice Sunday Statement, *A Generous Heart in the Love of Christ: Challenging Racism in Australia Today*. It suggests steps that we, as individuals and as members of our parishes, schools and local communities, can take to respond to the challenge of the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II:

How can the baptised claim to welcome Christ if they close the door to the foreigner who comes knocking?
(*Message for World Migration Day 2000*)

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Sunday Statement,
A Generous Heart in the Love of Christ: Challenging Racism in Australia Today,
can be downloaded from the websites of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (www.catholic.org.au) and the
ACSJC (www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au).

