

Liturgy Notes 2024

The following notes may be of use to link the 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, with Social Justice Sunday, 25 August 2024.

Welcome

On this Social Justice Sunday, Australia's Bishops invite us to reflect on what we, as Christians, are called to do in a world wracked by war and violence.

Truth is often the first casualty in war. The Gospel calls us to embrace the fundamental truth that every person on earth has a God-given dignity which cannot be taken away or ignored. From this truth flows the realisation that there is no 'us' or 'them'. Everyone on earth, whatever our race or creed or status, is a sister, a brother. We are all children of God. Keeping this truth before us is the key to overcoming violence and conflict.

Armed not with guns and missiles, but with love for our sisters and brothers, we are invited to speak of peace and to take action to promote peace in a violent world.

On this Social Justice Sunday, let us re-commit ourselves to cultivating a culture of peace by following Jesus who is the way, the truth and the life and the Prince of Peace.

Readings

Reading 1

Jos 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b

Joshua gathered together all the tribes of Israel at Shechem,
summoning their elders, their leaders,
their judges, and their officers.

When they stood in ranks before God,
Joshua addressed all the people:
"If it does not please you to serve the LORD,
decide today whom you will serve,
the gods your fathers served beyond the River
or the gods of the Amorites in whose country you are now dwelling.
As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

But the people answered,
"Far be it from us to forsake the LORD
for the service of other gods.
For it was the LORD, our God,
who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt,
out of a state of slavery.
He performed those great miracles before our very eyes
and protected us along our entire journey
and among the peoples through whom we passed.
Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 34:2-3, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21

R. (9a) **Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.**

I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall be ever in my mouth.
Let my soul glory in the LORD;
the lowly will hear me and be glad.
R. **Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.**

The LORD has eyes for the just,
and ears for their cry.

The LORD confronts the evildoers,
to destroy remembrance of them from the earth.

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

When the just cry out, the LORD hears them,
and from all their distress he rescues them.

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;
and those who are crushed in spirit he saves.

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Many are the troubles of the just one,
but out of them all the LORD delivers him;
he watches over all his bones;
not one of them shall be broken.

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Reading 2

Eph 5:21-32 or 5:2a, 25-32

Brothers and sisters:

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord.

For the husband is head of his wife
just as Christ is head of the church,
he himself the savior of the body.

As the church is subordinate to Christ,
so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives,
even as Christ loved the church
and handed himself over for her to sanctify her,
cleansing her by the bath of water with the word,
that he might present to himself the church in splendor,
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish.

So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself.

For no one hates his own flesh
but rather nourishes and cherishes it,
even as Christ does the church,
because we are members of his body.

*For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.*

This is a great mystery,
but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

or

Brothers and sisters:

Live in love, as Christ loved us.

Husbands, love your wives,
even as Christ loved the church

and handed himself over for her to sanctify her,
cleansing her by the bath of water with the word,

that he might present to himself the church in splendor,
without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish.
So also husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.
He who loves his wife loves himself.
For no one hates his own flesh
but rather nourishes and cherishes it,
even as Christ does the church,
because we are members of his body.
*For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.*

This is a great mystery,
but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.

Alleluia

Jn 6:63c, 68c

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life;
you have the words of everlasting life.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Jn 6:60-69

Many of Jesus' disciples who were listening said,
"This saying is hard; who can accept it?"
Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this,
he said to them, "Does this shock you?
What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending
to where he was before?
It is the spirit that gives life,
while the flesh is of no avail.
The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.
But there are some of you who do not believe."
Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe
and the one who would betray him.
And he said,
"For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me
unless it is granted him by my Father."

As a result of this,
many of his disciples returned to their former way of life
and no longer accompanied him.
Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?"
Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
We have come to believe
and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

Reflection on the Readings/Homily Notes

On this Social Justice Sunday, the readings put before us ask the question: What makes sense and what doesn't? This implies the question: Does a Christian commitment to social justice make sense? In the Gospel, some of those who have heard the words of Jesus – that he is the Bread of Life and that his Body must be eaten, and his Blood must be drunk – decide that this makes no sense, and they take their leave. They no longer follow the rabbi who doesn't make sense. They go in search of another teaching which does make sense. In response to the Lord's question, Peter says that Jesus makes ultimate sense as the one who has the words of eternal life in a way that no-one else has; and he has these words because he alone is "the Holy One of God". Whatever Peter and the disciples don't know, they have come to know that.

In the reading from the Book of Joshua, the Chosen People are faced with a big decision as they leave the desert and enter the Promised Land. Their God was a desert God who had met them in the desert and led them through the desert for forty years. In a world where gods were tied to place, it made sense to leave this God in the desert as they entered an agricultural land where other gods held sway, the gods the Bible knows as the Baals. They were the gods of the fertile, farming land in which a desert god wasn't fit for purpose. So, it made perfect sense to think that the People should bid farewell to their desert God and embrace the Baals. But Joshua puts before them another logic which doesn't seem to make sense – that they remain faithful to their desert God and reject the Baals who are false gods, that they trust their God to be their protector not only in the desert but also in the Promised Land. To this the People say yes. This is a major theological shift, implying that the deity is not tied to place: the God of Israel is God in every place. A new kind of universalism is born.

In the Letter to the Ephesians, Paul puts before his community a vision which doesn't make sense in a world where a wife was regarded as part of a man's goods and chattels and where it was seriously counter-cultural to speak of the dignity of every human being and the rights attaching to this. But Paul offers a vision of radical mutuality in marriage which is based upon a sense of the equal dignity and rights of husband and wife; and he links this to the radical mutuality of love which unites Christ and the Church. In the culture of the time, Paul's vision didn't make sense; but it was a vision born of the encounter with the Risen Christ, the Bridegroom who has taken a Bride to himself. It is this encounter which overturns all the seemingly non-negotiable hierarchies of the world, the kind of hierarchies which reject mutuality and see some human beings as having a dignity, and rights denied to others.

In a world of such hierarchies, Social Justice Sunday doesn't make sense, because it too speaks of the equal dignity of every human being and the inalienable rights that flow from this. Human dignity comes from God who has created every person in the divine image, has made each one a daughter or son of God. This is why every human being has rights which come from God and not from governments; and just as governments don't confer these rights, they have no power to take them away, however much they may try.

This year's Social Justice Statement has as its theme, **TRUTH AND PEACE: A Gospel Word in a Violent World**. At a time when violence is everywhere we look, such a word, a word of truth, doesn't seem to make sense. It looks like weakness in a world where it seems only the strong can thrive. But the Gospel says that what looks like strength is weakness and what looks like weakness is strength. This is the upside-down logic of the Cross which never seems to make sense.

War may seem to be a show of strength, but it isn't. The rejection of truth upon which war depends may seem to make sense but it doesn't. The prime truth, a recognition of which is essential for peace, is the God-given dignity of the human being, which is violated whenever we have war.

Connected to this is the further truth that every other human being is not my enemy but my sister, my brother, even my friend; and this truth too is rejected too whenever there is war. As St Paul says in Ephesians, there is only "one body"; but war denies that truth.

So, on this Social Justice Sunday and with the Social Justice Statement in our hand, we are God's People who speak that truth upon which peace depends. With Peter, we say to the Lord Jesus: "To whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we know that you are the Holy One of God". We are those who reply to Joshua: "We will serve the Lord, for he is our God", knowing that to serve the Lord isn't just a matter of religious formalities but requires a self-sacrificing commitment to the justice of God, a world of right relationship in which peace becomes possible, a world which makes sense.

Prayers of the Faithful

The following intercessions are offered for incorporation in your Prayers of the Faithful.

Presider: Let us bring our prayers to the God of justice and peace, and accompany in prayer those who most need God's peace.

For the Church:

That we might strive to promote a love for peace and reject a commitment to the stockpiling of weapons of war and violence.

Let us pray to the Lord: R. Lord hear our prayer.

For all people, young and old, who in so many corners of the world are suffering because of war and conflict:

That the fear and suffering caused by guns and bombs will be replaced by the joy brought by peace and friendship.

Let us pray to the Lord: R. Lord hear our prayer.

For our leaders in Australia and leaders across the world:

That they might work tirelessly to end the suffering of those caught up in war and conflict and to replace it with a spirit of friendship, collaboration and peace.

Let us pray to the Lord: R. Lord hear our prayer.

For those who have died through violence at home and abroad:

That they will be held in your loving embrace and their families and communities consoled in their time of grief.

Let us pray to the Lord: R. Lord hear our prayer.

Presider: God, in your goodness, you call us to love one another, to treat each other as sisters and brothers.

Give us humble hearts that listen intently to those around us. Let our loving and generous response to your call show forth our sure and certain hope that peace and justice will come to reign in our world.

We ask this through Christ, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

Sign of Peace

Presider: Let us be conscious, today, that we are all sisters and brothers, all children of God, and that the peace of Christ is not only a gift, but also, by virtue of our baptism, our mission.

The peace of the Lord be with you.

People: And with your spirit.

Presider: Turn to one another and offer a sign of the peace that Christ brings to the world.

Suggested Music

As One Voice 1 (AOV1)

As One Voice 2 (AOV2)

As One Voice Next Generation (AOVNG)

Catholic Worship Book II (CWB II)

Entrance

Come to the Feast AOV1-151

As We Gather CWBII 451

Christ, Be Our Light (Farrell) AOV2-3, CWBII 540

Gather Us in AOV1-12, CWB II 501

Gather Your People, O Lord (Hurd) AOV1-71, CWBII 490

Love Is His Word CWBII 553

Sing a New Song AOV1-80

Procession of the Gifts

Servant Song CWBII 461
The Cry of the Poor (Foley) AOV1-83, CWBII 618
Who Will Speak? (Farrell) AOV2-102
Your Love is Finer than Life (Haugen) CWBII 567

Communion

Act Justly AOV1-50
As Grains of Wheat AOV2-153
Bread of Life, Hope of the World (Farrell) CWBII 459
Grant to Us, O Lord CWBII 291
I Have Loved You (Joncas) AOV1-126, CWBII 511
One Bread, One Body AOV1-129, CWBII 579
Our Blessing Cup (Hurd) AOV1-7
Seed, Scattered and Sown (Soper) CWBII 592
Take and Eat (Joncas) CWBII 608
Ubi Caritas (Taizé) CWBII 634
Where there is Charity and Love (Connolly) CWBII 638
Where There Is Love AOV1-87

Thanksgiving

Prayer for Peace AOV1-91
Amazing Grace AOV1-29, CWBII 450
Be Reconciled as One AOV1-162
Blessed Are They 1-55
Everlasting Your Love AOV1-128
I Have Loved You with an Everlasting Love AOV1-126
Lift Up Your Heart CWBII 539
The Magnificat AOV1-52
Make Me a Channel of Your Peace CWBII 555

Recessional

A New Heart for a New World AOV1-158
Christ Light, Shining in the Darkness CWBII 468
City of God AOV1-57 CWBII 453
Companions on the Journey AOV1-188
God of Day and God of Darkness CWBII 498
Galilee Song AOV1-5
Go Make a Difference (Angrisano) AOVNG 52
Let There Be Peace on Earth AOV1-190
Send Us as Your Blessing, Lord AOV1-181
Song For Human Rights AOV2-135, CWBII 606
Take the Word of God with You (Walker) CWBII 607
They'll Know We Are Christians (Scholtes) AOV1-130
Though the Mountains May Fall (Schutte) AOV1-182

More information and downloadable resources related to the Statement from the Office for Justice, Ecology and Peace www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au