

**November 2007 Monthly G.R.A.C.E. Session for Adults**  
**Catechetical Area: Interacting with the Wider World (Catholic Social Teaching)**  
**Catechetical Theme: The Principle of Human Dignity**  
**Event Focus: Upcoming M.C.R.E.S.T. shelter for homeless**

*Three stations, 25 minutes each, 5 minute transitions*

**Station A: The “Two Feet” of Social Outreach (JoAnne)**

1. Opening questions:

- How many of you have ever tried to walk hopping on one foot? What happened?
- Are you able to achieve your goal to get someplace?
- Besides walking with ease, what does using 2 feet allow you to do? (balance, move more productively, get where you are going)

2. In working for needs of others, serving both their immediate needs and working to correct injustices placed upon them, we need to keep in mind the importance of helping them to maintain their human dignity. We can use the same image of two feet to show the need for balance to achieve the goals set before us.

- What words come to mind when you hear the words “human dignity”, injustices?
- How difficult is it to show respect to ALL regardless of their position or culture?
- What opinions get in the way when serving the needs of others?

3. Explaining the 2 feet of Social Action:

- The social mission is something that we are asked to embrace as followers of Jesus. The social mission has “2 feet” both of which are necessary in order to be in right relationship with God and God’s people.
- The 2 feet of Social Action gives us a framework to look at how action in promoting and respecting the dignity of human life involves both helping people survive their present crisis or need AND addressing the root causes of the problems: direct service to those in need, and action for justice to address the causes that perpetuate the problem. Real change happens when we work together to alleviate the present suffering caused by an injustice and organize our energies to eradicate the causes of the injustice. Justice and charity are both rooted in the social dimension of the gospels and reflect the same gospel directives. Both can be powerful Christian responses to human need. The dividing line is often blurred and many a response is a blend of justice and charity.
- Example: If we see someone drowning in a river, we try to save the victim. But suppose we find another person struggling in the water at the same place, then two or three the next day. If we finally realize that they are falling in the river because there is a hole in the bridge, we might change our response. We could still wait by the riverside to aid victims or we could take a hammer and nails to try to rebuild the bridge.
- Social justice and charity are sister values, but charity seems to be the one that people give the most attention to. Social justice is more easily overlooked or given a back seat.
- What is charity and what would be examples of works of charity? What does it achieve, who is it for?
- How does this differ from justice...what would be examples of works of justice?
- I’m going to hand out a diagram of the “Two Feet of Social Action”...look at it for a few minutes and then we can share our thoughts on how they differ...  
-Which one is harder to do and why?

4. Where do we begin to change our habit of focusing only on works of charity to a habit of using both feet?

- Look at examples of feet on wall...first the work of charity...then the work of justice. Do you see a beginning place for you...these are just examples...can you think of others?

Examples:

- Working to feed the homeless/Contributing to Habitat for Humanity
- Sending gifts to those suffering from AIDS/supporting organizations that educate society about AIDS, support legislation for research

5. Look at your two empty feet on the back of your sheet...imagine putting works of charity in one and works of justice in the other. What would you put in each.

- How many could imagine the list in the foot of charity...How many could imagine one in the foot of justice...Sharing?
- Looking at the charity foot, think about how you felt when you donated food, clothing, or time...what feeling were present in the recipients of your donations.
- Look at the justice foot...what did you learn about justice in your action...what changes in society would help the situation.
- I would like to close with examples from scripture:
  - Charity- the good Samaritan
  - Justice- Moses freeing the Jewish slaves in Egypt...Let my people go!

### **Station B: Understanding Catholic Social Teaching in Light of Its Foundational Principle of Human Dignity (Fr. Dave)**

1. Re-state the principle (see sheet)

2. Brainstorm: What are some consequences of taking this principle seriously in our personal, family, social, cultural, political lives? (Point out the eight feet that have been placed on the board as some of these)

3. How did this principle become the cornerstone of Catholic moral teaching?

A brief history of how/why the principle came into Catholic social teaching (see sheet)

- ◆ first phase: confronting the excesses of the industrial revolution: worker's rights based on intrinsic human dignity
- ◆ second phase: confronting the reality of "developing" world, rising national movements: human rights both economic and political based on intrinsic human dignity
- ◆ third phase: confronting post-industrial, globalized world: transforming culture based on intrinsic human dignity

4. Go deeper into what makes a human person, a person? What constitutes a human person? Brainstorm and show how commitment to principle of human dignity means protecting these dimensions as well.

Some possible characteristics:

- ◆ relationality/intrinsically social
- ◆ core, responsible freedom
- ◆ body and soul unity
- ◆ open to transcendence, growth, change
- ◆ part of creation
- ◆ marked by sin
- ◆ etc.

5. Integrating this principle into our daily lives

--what would be different in our lives if we did so?

--what are the challenges to doing it?

--exercise: take the day from the moment of waking up till bedtime: reflect on each person you encountered during the day, even if fleetingly. How did you do with honoring this foundational principle? Which people or situations tested you the most? Or, look at the day/week ahead and do the same kind of reflection. The point of this principle isn't to know it in our head or be able to recite it, but to embody it in such a way that we don't even think about it, yet we act on its basis on all situations.

6. Questions/discussions

**Station C: Personal Testimony from Guest Speakers on How Human Dignity Has Affected Their Ministry (Sr. Barbara, Mike Harning, Sr. Valerie, MCREST speaker)**

Sunday's presenter: Sister Barbara Zimmer (Hispanic Ministry)

Tuesday's presenter: Michael Harning (Archdiocese of Detroit)

Wednesday's presenter: Sister Valerie Knoche (Hispanic Ministry)

Friday's presenter: Jimetta Lewis (MCREST)

Topic – Personal experiences in areas of Dignity of human person

Location – Church

Questions for presenters of Module 3 to consider covering in their presentation.

Based on your experiences, how would you inspire other adults to see importance of understanding principle of human dignity?

What are some concrete and solid ways to express the dignity of the human person in our daily lives?

Why should we base our lives on this principle?