

LENT 2017

Practice justice by ...
listening to the stories of the poor of this world. Remember the big media rarely cover the stories of the poor of this world. You have to search out good information about the poor. Search and listen!

Practice justice by ...
never be afraid to ask the tough questions. It is not good enough to bring food for the food bank in our city. We need to ask, "Why are people poor in such a rich country?" "Why do they lack daily resources such as food?"

Practice justice by ...
making it a part of your daily prayer. Include the hungry, the migrant, the refugee, single mothers and fathers and the under-employed in your prayer. Hold these people to the Lord.

Practice justice by
learning more about the cause of working for world peace, of eliminating hunger, of building sufficient schools and health clinics for those who do not have the resources to do so. Education in the plight of others will open your heart to them.

PRACTICE JUSTICE: PRACTICE OUR FAITH

In the life of every human being there are moments of significant learning. Many young adults hear from their little children, "But you said..." Right then and there they know that they have been called to account by their own three year old. They have said one thing but they are doing another action. This cannot carry on. As an adult, if I do not change then my wrong behaviour will be the norm for my child's life.

What a powerful moment of learning?

There are moments when we are driving on the icy streets and we conclude, "I had better improve my driving skills or I will be in trouble."

What a moment of learning. The entire Church has come through a century and half of significant learning. We learnt at the end of the eighteenth century about the rights that workers have and the security that belongs to each worker by the simple fact that he or she is a human being. Much of the labor practices of the nineteenth century exploited the worker. Now we have come to understand that children have a right to medical care, education and protection under the law.

All this new awareness challenged the sense that the practice of faith was a personal event and did not have social implications. We now are convinced that our faith can never be separated from our social reality. →



In the twenty-first century we can only pray when we hold on to the bible (The Word of God), our bank statement (how we use our resources) and our heart (how we are being challenged to share and care about the poor of this world) in one hand. Today's spirituality embraces the world, beginning with the poor of our own Province.

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Lord, when I pray "give us this day our daily bread" I want to turn to the right to see that my neighbor has the means to care and feed his children. I cannot ask you to care for my family if I do not ask that I care for my neighbor's family.

Now, I know some people right around me get upset, but my neighbor might be a landless worker in Bangladesh. My neighbor might be a young mother doing backbreaking work picking tea on a hillside in Kenya.

Lord, when I pray for peace, turn my heart to trying to bring the world to stop the practice of war. Instead, teach all human beings to grow corn, millet and vegetables for the people who have no land to grow food. Make my life a life of peace building.

The people of the Third World point out that in the past the Europeans would go to church on Sunday but practiced slavery, which is a violent exploitation of the poor and the vulnerable. This is a contradiction. You cannot claim to believe in the goodness of God and at the same time hurt your fellow human being. You cannot get rich off the sweat of the poor slaves out in the fields!

All human life is sacred. No one human is of lesser value than the other. The illiterate woman picking tea on the hillside in Eastern Africa is as valuable as her highly educated sister in North America.

Fortunately this awareness of the sacredness of human life had dominated the official teaching of the Church during this past century. This is not an optional matter.

Our prayer, the study of the Scriptures and the actual living out of the spiritual life always embraces our social reality. How we are trying to live in our society is but an expression of what we believe. Our faith is translated into action when we work to change poverty into well being, bring the little girls of the world into our schools and work to eliminate war from the face of humanity.

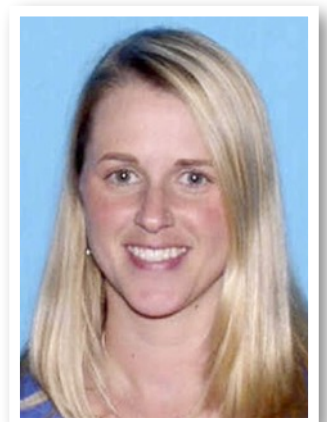
In very broad terms we call this the practice of justice. This means

that we have a responsibility to care for the hungry of this world. We turn toward the plight of the thousands of refugees who must flee their original homeland because of civil war. We want to help in building schools for the families that will never have an opportunity to send their children to school.

Our faith embraces the world. It has a strong social dimension toward the poor and vulnerable of this world. There can never be an excuse to retain a blind eye towards those who suffer in this world.

Today there is a significant change in the way we practice our faith. We know that the people who actually draw closer to God in their prayer and study of the Scriptures actually draw closer to their fellow human being.

The practice of our faith does not isolate us but rather opens us to the world. When we pray for our daily bread we look around to see that every other human being has sufficient bread for their family.



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Your faith must lead you to a life of justice and peace

Kevin shared his discomfort with some of the religious piety he sees around him. “There are a few people who are completely focused on serving God but in their case it only means that they are concerned with God and I. It is a very self-serving form of prayer, “ there was a deep breath, “ and I think it is off the mark when it comes to serving God.

“Yes, we are focused on doing the right thing in step with God but we live and pray within the breath and love of the heart of God. Prayer will always stretch us. “

A Christian never lives and prays apart from the human reality. The joys and the pains of the

human race are our joys and pains. We are not isolated spiritual persons but rather believers who are connected with our sisters and brothers. We are connected with their well being and with their suffering.

Sharing the gospel with others, which we call evangelization, always includes the well being of others. When we share the Good News of Jesus we are also concerned if the single mother can make ends meet. What kind of medical care is available to the families who work so much of the land in Asia and Africa?

In Canada the Catholic Church has tried to educate and broaden our understanding of the plight of so many peoples throughout the globe.

We want to live our faith in such a way that went we go shopping for clothes for our children and we pick up a shirt or pair of jeans we will examine the label. Where is this made? China or Bangladesh? Were these workers paid a living wage and was this garment made under safe conditions?

It is never sufficient to buy cheap clothing but we also want to ask what conditions these pieces of clothing were manufactured and shipped to North America. Our spiritual practices and teaching must bring us to the awareness of living and practicing justice.

We know that it is never sufficient to speak of justice, we must also practice justice in our daily lives.

Lord Jesus,

thank you for my fellow Christians who model for us how to practice justice by asking the tough questions about the source of our cheap goods. They lift my life up by two steps .

Lord Jesus,

for every moment that you stretch my heart to be concerned about my fellow human being, I just want to thank you. Our lives are better because you challenge us.

You are just if you.....

- do not look only at your own table but ask how the poor are to feed their own children tonight..
- you examine who is being paid a fair living wage.

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The practice of justice is always life-giving, We do not come to the garden to only uproot the weeds. We come to plant potatoes, beans and lettuce to feed the hungry of the world. We plant flowers to bring joy to one another. Justice is working to thrive; bringing all brothers and sisters to share the blessings of this earth.



I WILL BUILD A GREAT LIFE

By building great days.

To destroy, to hurt, to tear down is weakness.

To create, to heal, to build is strength.

I will be a creator, a healer, a builder.

I will dream great dreams and make them come true.

My footprints in the sands of time will give my brothers and sisters a gift of hope and encouragement.

This world will be a better place to live because I was here.

Poem "Footprints"

◆ 1995 Ralph Ransom