JUSTICE AND THE EUCHARIST

STUDENT HAND OUT

AT THE HEART OF THE PROBLEMS THE WORLD FACES – POVERTY, HUNGER, OPPRESSION, AND WAR – WE CAN SEE A LACK OF JUSTICE OR FAIRNESS. HOW IS THIS LINKED TO OUR CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST WHEN WE GO TO MASS?

WHAT IS JUSTICE?

TRY THIS

› Look up justice in a dictionary. What does justice mean to you?
› Write your own definition.

TRÓCAIRE

Trócaire believes that justice is not only about keeping the law. It is:
› Respect for the rights of others
› Fairness and equality of treatment
› The common good
› Honesty and truth in our relationships

EUCHARIST – BODY AND SOUL

To worship God fully truly requires our whole being – body and soul. Our bodies help our minds and hearts to receive what we hear, and to express what we say.

Each action or gesture seeks to place us in proper frame of mind and heart to encounter God’s presence.

During the times that we stand, we use our bodies to help keep our minds attentive to the sung or spoken words of prayer or Sacred Scripture.

When we are to kneel, we invite ourselves to become humble of heart, making ready to receive the Lord’s Real Presence in the Eucharist.

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When we kneel during those most sacred of words, spoken first by Jesus himself at the Last Supper, through which bread and wine become his own sacred flesh and blood.

Sitting, for its part, offers us a way of making our bodies comfortable, that we might listen and meditate with greater ease

In this way, we do not simply say the words, but our whole being, body and soul, word and action, takes part in our worship of God.

Our bodies truly do help us to worship God properly, opening us up to a deeper encounter the Word, “who gives his flesh for the life of the world.”

“The Eucharist is the heart and summit of the Church’s life.” Catechism 1407

WHAT DOES THE EUCHARIST ASK OF US?

The Eucharist is: “...a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity...” Catechism 1323

› If we love our neighbours we will not feel comfortable until they are treated in a just and fair manner.
› If we are united with them we will support them and take action for change with them.
› If we are charitable we will share what we have with them.
› In Catholic social teaching charity and solidarity are one in the same, there is no distinction. In love we embrace justice, there is not charity without justice.

“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” 1 Cor 12:26-27

THE CHALLENGE OF THE EUCHARIST

The Church says we have an “obligation in justice” to change the unjust systems that keep some people poor.

› Going to Mass is not the end of our commitment – we need to connect what happens in the Mass with the world outside.
› When we receive communion we are responding to a challenge.

› We are meeting Christ and we are asked to recognise him in everyone we meet. He asks us to share what we have with one another.
› We have to be involved in our world in the way Jesus was in his. This not only helps others – it makes us more like Christ. It is an invitation to change.

MISSION

At the Last Supper Jesus showed us the link between his mission and ours. He washed his disciples’ feet, putting himself at the service of others. See John 13:15;34.

UNITY AND COMMUNITY

The word communion reminds us of union and community. We celebrate our union with Christ and our community with people locally and globally.

ACTION

Before we participate in the Eucharist we are asked to recognise what we have done and what we have failed to do in our relationship with God and other people. We are hypocrites if we accept the blessings we are given without taking any action to change things. Can we celebrate the Eucharist whilst ignoring people in need?

TRY THIS

“Do not honour Jesus here in church clothed in silk vestments and then pass him by unclothed and frozen outside.” St John Chrysostom. See also Matthew 5:23-24.

› In pairs: Discuss what you think this means.

This hand out does not tell you everything you need to know about the Eucharist and the Church’s teaching. It focuses on one important aspect – justice.
The Eucharist is a celebration and a sharing. Sharing a meal can be a special occasion anywhere but many people today go hungry. Hunger is not inevitable, it is an injustice. There are many other injustices in today’s world:

**IF THE WORLD WAS A VILLAGE OF 100 PEOPLE:**

- 67 would be illiterate
- 50 would be malnourished
- 27 would be younger than 15
- 7 would have internet access
- 1 would have a university degree
- 1 would be HIV positive

Taken from 80:20 2006 edition statistics correct at time of print.

**CHECK IT OUT**

- Micah 6:8
- Isaiah 58:6-8
- Matthew 5:23-24
- Matthew 25:31-46
- Catechism section 2, chapter 1, article 3

**TRY THIS**

- Which of these facts surprised you most? Find more facts about injustice on the website suggested.
- What do you think are the main causes of poverty in the Majority World? See Trócaire’s poverty fact sheet www.trocaire.org/sites/trocaire/files/pdfs/edu/POVERTY.pdf
- “To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation, to prisoners freedom and to those in sorrow joy.”
  Eucharistic Prayer IV
- Why do you think this prayer is said at Mass?

**THINK ABOUT IT**

- “It is by my deeds that I will show you my faith.”
  James 2:18

How can we live more justly? Make a list of ways in which our lives and our faith could be more closely linked.

- Imagine your younger brother or sister is preparing for First Communion. In a few words explain what the Eucharist is and what it means for you.

Find out about Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador who was murdered in 1980. What do his life and death tell us about the connection between justice and the Eucharist?

“A celebrated Eucharist imposes on us and at the same time renders us capable of becoming, in our turn, bread broken for brothers, coming to meet their needs and giving ourselves.”

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**TRÓCAIRE**

Working for a Just World