

## Social Justice Reflection September, 2024

### The Difference Between Charity and Justice

Although both charity and justice are constitutive elements of the Gospel, and, therefore, essential in what provide us with the foundation of our actions of doing God's will on earth, they are not identical. Here's a chart, taken from the office of Social Justice, Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis.

Charity	Justice
Charity = social service. Charity provides direct services like food, clothing, shelter.	Justice = social change. Justice promotes social change in institutions or political structures.
Responds to immediate needs.	Responds to long-term needs.
Directed at the <i>effects</i> of injustice, its symptoms. Charity addresses existing problems.	Directed at the <i>root causes</i> of social problems. Justice addresses the <i>underlying structures</i> or <i>causes</i> of these problems.
Charity is private, individual acts.	Justice is public, collective actions.
Examples of charity: homeless shelters, food banks, clothing drives, emergency services.	Examples of justice: legislative advocacy, changing policies and practices, political action.

Historically, we have been very good at doing charity. Doing justice, because the results are often not immediate, is more challenging. We are called, as Jesus showed by His example, to be *in* the world, but *not of* the world.

Here are two inspirational quotes:

***Human society will be [well-ordered, beneficial and in keeping with human dignity] if the citizens, guided by justice, apply themselves seriously to respecting the rights of others and discharging their own duties; if they are moved by such fervor of charity as to make their own the needs of others and share with others their own goods: if finally, they work for a closer fellowship in the world of spiritual values.***

Pacem in Terris ("Peace on Earth"), Pope John XXIII, 1963 #35.

***Catholic teaching calls us to serve those in need and to change the structures that deny people their dignity and rights as children of God. Service and action, charity and justice are complementary components of parish social ministry. Neither alone is sufficient; both are essential signs of the gospel at work. A parish serious about social ministry will offer opportunities to serve those in need and to advocate for justice and peace. These are not competing priorities, but two dimensions of the same fundamental mission to protect the life and dignity of the human person.***

Communities of Salt and Light, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1993 "Charity and Outreach."

For further reflection; there are many other sources available:

<https://cctwincities.org/education-advocacy/catholic-social-teaching/notable-quotations/charity-and-justice/>

<https://capp-usa.org/2022/03/charity-vs-justice-article/>