



THE POINT

Being made in God's image is the foundation for all just living. Every person has equal dignity and worth, so we are to show love through respecting and honoring all people.

Just Living

In all of the Gospels we see how Jesus addressed the needs of a diverse group of people. Because of the cultural and religious boundaries of the time, society considered many of the groups Jesus addressed outcasts. Jesus considered everyone worthy of love and respect. He showed that injustice and suffering must be opposed by words and actions.

The Gospel according to Luke includes several famous passages that challenge our concept of love. Jesus requires his disciples to love God and neighbor as he does—to go beyond their own needs and to care for the needs and well-being of others. We must put our love for God into action by loving all people. This involves risk and sometimes rejection. The Parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates this point quite powerfully (see Luke 10:25–37).

In this parable, a lawyer first posed several questions to Jesus. Ultimately, Jesus led the lawyer to answer his own questions. Jesus shocked the lawyer and his listeners because Jesus knew that his listeners distrusted Samaritans, whom they considered to have “mixed blood” and therefore treated them like outcasts. Yet the Samaritan is the person who helped the stranger. How could the enemy they distrust and despise turn out to be the hero in this story? Jesus pushed the definition of neighbor far beyond the normal understanding of the term and cast aside restrictions on who their neighbor was. Jesus taught them that the law of love had no boundaries.

In this parable, Jesus extended love of neighbor to include everyone—even one's enemies. It gives us insight into the importance of justice in a world where so many people are aban-

doned while the rest of the world moves along oblivious to their pain. Jesus challenges us to approach everyone as worthy of love and respect.

Christian concern for the rights of everyone in society is based on a firm sense of equal dignity and human solidarity. Every person possesses the human dignity that comes from being made in God's image. Therefore, all people are united and connected as children of God, and all are each other's neighbor.

In our society people suffer because they are “passed by” as was the injured person in the parable. People are excluded and discriminated against because of their gender (sexism), race (racism), age (ageism), religion, social class, sexual orientation, or disabilities. When this happens, people are denied a life reflecting their God-given dignity. The Catholic understanding of justice affirms that, with God's grace, a world of caring and sharing is possible. Justice is the constant and firm will to give God and other people what is their due. Justice is a virtue, a process, and a goal.

As disciples, we are called to be God's co-workers, to challenge others to respect and value the dignity of all people, to help make the world more like the Kingdom of God of which Jesus preached. We work together as a community of faith, guided by the Holy Spirit and strengthened by the grace received in the sacraments.



THE PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP

The obvious message of the Good Samaritan parable is that we are all asked to help others—regardless of whom they are. But another message is simply this—the “outcast” in the story is the person who does good. We have all felt like outcasts in our own lives, but that does not prevent us from extending a hand to others—those who are outcast too, or those who may appear to have things together but might still be hurting.

- In the next week, to whom can you reach out? Who needs you to notice them?



PERSON OF FAITH

Jack Egan (1916–2001)

Jack Egan’s father, a bus driver in Chicago, was quite unhappy when Jack left DePaul University to go to the seminary. But Jack became a priest his father admired, in his own words, “a lay person’s priest.” At his ordination, Father Egan vowed to work for the improvement of the role of lay people in the Church and to never say *no* to those he could help. Vatican Council II and the Civil Rights movement became major influences in Father Egan’s life and work. He took the advice of theologian Karl Rahner to “pray with the Scriptures in one hand and the daily newspaper in the other.” Father Egan began to work with community organizers in Chicago to improve neighborhoods and increase the educational and work opportunities for minority groups and people who were poor. In time Father Egan was named a monsignor. Working the political scene and networking people became trademarks of his style. Social justice was Msgr. Egan’s life work and his great passion.



LIVING AS A DISCIPLE

- **Be aware and act** It can be hard to imagine reaching across an ocean to offer help, but you can find lots of ways to help through local and national organizations. Catholic Relief Services is a great place to start. Check out their Web site and see what’s possible.
- **Peace it back** Think of the people in your own life who you struggle with the most—a family member, kids at school, someone you work with. Loving your neighbor means working to love these very people. In the next week, how will you treat them differently?

PRAYER: *Help me, Lord, to see you in everyone I meet.*