

November 2010

***Justice is Not Enough
... and a Word of Thanks!***

We hear about “justice” in any number of settings; from scripture, Church documents and parish pulpits, to newspapers, academic texts and political commentators. What we know, if only from experience, is that cries for justice alone are not enough to overcome the frequent tension when there is a clash between needs and resources, or between rights and responsibilities.

In his encyclical letter, “Charity in Truth,” Pope Benedict XVI explains that justice “prompts us to give the other what is “his”, what is due him...” But he reminds us that we are called to a higher standard, one that requires justice as a prerequisite but goes beyond me giving to the other what is his, to me offering what is “mine.” We are called to love. We are called to charity that “transcends justice and completes it in the logic of giving and forgiving...prompted not merely by relationships of rights and duties, but...by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy and communion.”(6)

Relationships of utility and technical efforts toward just frameworks are inherently vulnerable to exploitation of self interest and power. Instead, to “love someone is to desire that person’s good and to take effective steps to secure it.”(7) Pursing “the good” however, presumes an understanding of the truth of the nature of the human person, of dignity, and of vocation. This “mission of truth” is one aspect that this past Respect Life month has been highlighting, in service to the call to love: that the human person is created in the image God, has inherent dignity, and is called to a vocation ordered to our imitation of Christ, living life as gift. (Of course another crucial highlight is the very fundamental point that this “mission of truth” can only be relevant if a life conceived has the opportunity also to be born!)

The images of the care for the vulnerable on the cover of this year’s [Respect Life flyer](#), and the theme, “The Measure of Love is to Love Without Measure,” are examples of the response to this call to love, this call to charity; and they are anchored around the presence of the Eucharistic Christ, both the example and means to live the call. “It is the primordial truth of God’s love, grace bestowed upon us, that opens our lives to gift...”(8)

“Only through an encounter with God are we able to see in the other* something more than just another creature, to recognize the divine image in the other, thus truly coming to discover him or her and to mature in a love that “becomes concern and care for the other.””(11) *Consider here the “other” not only as the mother or friend or child you recognize, and may love easily, but truly the “other”: the stranger, the enemy, the new embryo who seems to bear no resemblance to you...

Ultimately then it is hearing the truth of God’s love, and the invitation to an encounter with God, that breathes promise into the work of justice.

Thank you for being a witness to life. Thank you for shining the light of truth that helps us see the truth of love, and invites us to live love in truth; living more fully our own dignity, and responding more authentically to the cries of justice surrounding us.

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