

'JUSTICE: INCLUSIVE AND ACTIVE' – HOMILY - 18 SEPTEMBER 2016

Children say, *"That's not fair"*.

Society adds a deeper dimension and says, *"That's not just"*.

The Bible adds a greater depth when it speaks of justice.

In the Sunday readings of Luke's Gospel over the next two weeks, Jesus tells two parables:

1. A **RICH MAN** who had a **DISHONEST STEWARD** - Luke 16:1-8 with sayings and 16:9-13
2. A **RICH MAN** who feasted daily while a **POOR MAN, LAZARUS**, lay at his gate, desiring the table scraps - Luke 16:19-31

We hear about the rich man and Lazarus next weekend.

We know neither the steward (manager) nor the rich man impress us.

Neither reflects God's love.

The steward is dishonest and the rich man (owner) admires how the steward responds.

Neither are role models.

Forms of a specific Greek word are used in this parable – [ἀδικία, adikias](#) –

In verse 8 about the steward, in verse 9 about the wealth,

In verse 10, twice about us, and once in verse 11, about use of wealth.

Adikias means more than dishonest, it means unrighteous, unjust.

We are not surprised to hear that 'unrighteous' is the opposite of 'righteous'.

But what does Righteous mean?

In the Old Testament there are several words for justice.

The main Hebrew words used are [MISHPAT](#) and [TSEDAQAH](#).

The Greek word [δικαιος dikaios](#) is often used in the New Testament for both Hebrew words.

This Year as we focus on the **YEAR OF MERCY**, we learn that **MERCY** is more than a noun, it is a verb – *'mercying'*. So too with **JUSTICE**, in the Biblical sense.

Not just a noun of legal concepts and laws, but a verb, a process in action, doing justice, acting justly.

Doing justice involves a commandment, a giving, a distributing, being **INCLUSIVE**.

Pope Francis explained it on 9th July 2015 in this way,

"Working for a just distribution of the fruits of the earth and human labour is not mere philanthropy. It is a moral obligation.

For Christians, the responsibility is even greater: it is a commandment.

It is about giving to the poor and to peoples what is theirs by right.

The universal destination of goods is not a figure of speech found in the Church's social teaching.

It is a reality prior to private property.

Property, especially when it affects natural resources, must always serve the needs of peoples. And those needs are not restricted to consumption.

It is not enough to let a few drops fall whenever the poor shake a cup which never runs over by itself. Welfare programs geared to certain emergencies can only be considered temporary and incidental responses.

They could never replace true inclusion, an inclusion which provides worthy, free, creative, participatory and solidary work."

On the 17th February this year, he stressed,

"Profit and capital are not a good over and above the human person; they are at the service of the common good.

When the common good is used only at the service of profit and capital, this has a name: it is called exclusion, and through it the throwaway culture gets stronger and stronger. Throwaway and exclusion."

And, of course, a true common good is **INCLUSIVE**.

We face the challenge of a new colonialism that is exclusive.

Pope Francis on the 9th July 2015 said that,

"The new colonialism takes on different faces.

At times it appears as the anonymous influence of mammon: corporations, loan agencies, certain "free trade" treaties, and the imposition of measures of "austerity" which always tighten the belt of workers and the poor...

... At other times, under the noble guise of battling corruption, the narcotics trade and terrorism – grave evils of our time which call for coordinated international action – we see states being saddled with measures which have little to do with the resolution of these problems and which not infrequently worsen matters."

The Gospel tells us that we cannot serve/love God and mammon.

We cannot serve wholeheartedly both, an inclusive loving God and an exclusive anonymous idol of mammon or wealth.

Jesus is inclusive in his contact with people, in his stories and parables, in his healing of people and their relationships. A just person is faithful to doing justice,

Doing justice (being inclusive in restoring and in healing relationships with God and each other).

Doing justice recognises that **EACH PERSON IS CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE AND LIKENESS** and respects that dignity.

Restoring land to people dispossessed, restoring possessions to people who were robbed,

Restoring dignity to people whose rights were ignored.

Restoring the gifts from God to people, who have been robbed by others.

Protecting the earth created by God.

Restoring a loving relationship with our Creator, instead of worshipping the idols of greed and selfishness and the anonymous faces of colonialism.

Justice is more than fairness, more than rights, it is all about inclusive relationships, where no one is deprived of what God shares with them.

When we reflect on the unjust steward and his employer, who admires the astuteness of the steward,

We see injustice and selfishness and greed.

When we reflect on the actions and challenges and healings of Jesus, we see **JUSTICE** and **MERCY** and **LOVE** and **COMPASSION** together, all in action.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – 'Justice: Inclusive and Active' – 18 September 2016]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/091816.cfm>]

[Strong's Concordance: <http://biblehub.com/strongs.htm>]