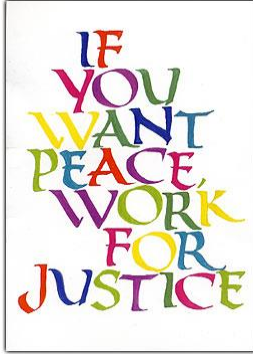


## RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS



I used to view social justice as working to change companies, corporations, cultures, societies, systems and laws that perpetuate injustice. These injustices manifested themselves as explicit actions, discriminatory practices or unintended, but still unjust, consequences.

Archbishop John Vlazny espoused a simpler and more mature view, however, of social justice as creating right relationships.

When relationships are unequal and one party has an advantage over another then there is no right relationship. A right relationship does not exist. For example, a corporation that has the power of money unbalanced and unchecked by the power its community derives from its people has an unbalanced or wrong relationship. Social Justice calls us to create right relationships.

In Luke's gospel, Lazarus and the rich man have an unbalanced relationship. That's obvious. But even if the rich man fed Lazarus the scraps from his table and shooed away the dogs, or better, even if the rich man clothed Lazarus and fed him a regular daily meal, Lazarus and the rich man would still be participating in a wrong relationship.

When people are generous they are in control. Even with the best of intentions those who provide charity have an advantage over the recipients of their charity. Minimizing or eliminating this advantage requires moving from direct service to social justice. It requires empowering the poor and the vulnerable. It requires giving a voice to those who are not heard. It requires eliminating injustices.

It requires right relationships.

(Readings for the 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time)



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