

Two Feet of Social

If you have ever sprained an ankle, you know that you tend to walk putting more weight on the good foot and less on the injured side. A healthy person on the other hand, walks using two good feet. In our efforts to make this a better world and to live out our Christian commitment two good feet are also necessary. We can call them "CHARITY" and "JUSTICE".

CHARITY can be seen as focusing on the needs of individuals and families and meeting immediate needs. It is another name for practicing the corporal works of mercy: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, and burying the dead.

Daily in our parish communities we see countless number of "good Samaritans" who practice such charity. They are those who, for example:

- contribute to food shelves and food drives
- serve meals in soup kitchens
- visit the sick
- give generously to collections to help the poor and vulnerable
- are members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in their parish

and you can probably name many more such actions.

But what about the other foot, that of "JUSTICE"? Those who use this foot accompany "CHARITY" with work for long-term social change to eradicate the need for charity by addressing the root causes of social problems. That begins with studying and analyzing the situation so that any action taken is based on facts and is in tune with gospel values. Actions taken might be:

- Speaking out on issues that can bring about change
- Working with groups to change legislative and budget priorities
- Participating in the election process so that candidates who best stand for Christian principles are elected
- Supporting organizations working for justice

How much can one person do? Surely, not everything, but as Margaret Mead has said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Perhaps our God-given gifts are more suited for one foot than the other, but both are urgently needed in our world today.

The Catholic Church, through papal encyclicals and conciliar and episcopal documents, has articulated 7 principles to guide us as we try to live out our faith and work for a just world. Future articles will explore these Seven Principles of Catholic Social Action.

(Submitted by the Diocesan Social Concerns Committee)