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|  | **The “ART” of Social Justice** |
| What’s the Point? | We have introduced the teens to the 2 Steps of Social Justice, and we have challenged them to begin thinking and acting as if what they do matters (which it does). Now in that vein we are going to take an in depth look Charity and Advocacy. We will have the students reflect on what talents they possess to not only help provide for the immediate needs of those less fortunate, but more importantly how their talents can change the social structure of the world around them. |
| **Background Information** | ***Reference***   * *CCC: ¶* *2420-25* * NAB : Mt 5:1-12 (Beatitudes)   We are driven by our conscience, the voice of God built into each of us. We are guided by the Commandments and the Beatitudes. We know that it is not enough to talk about the teachings of Jesus and to know Catholic social teachings. As Christians, we are required to put them into practice. As St. James says:  *“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead*.” (*Jas 2:14-17*)  The Faith James speaks about is the truth we know and live by. If our faith, the truth, does not spur us to action, then it is dead within us. As we and our Christianity grow from the innocence and ignorance of infancy to the wisdom of a well-aged adult we must analyze our God-given talents and callings and apply them to the social injustices we see going on in our community (both local and global). There is truly an ‘art’ to it, in the Greek sense where art is work which seeks to capture what the gods inspire within us.  The “ART of Catholic Social Teaching” was originally developed by the Office of Justice and Peace of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, Virginia, and then picked up by the American bishops (USCCB) to help parishes integrate charity, Catholic social teaching, and justice into their everyday practice. ART is an acronym that stands for *Act*, *Reflect*, and *Transform*. The goal of the ART process is to infuse the values and work of building God's Reign of justice and peace into our lives and world.  Our first response to a social injustice is to ACT. We see a need and want to provide an immediate response. When we ACT, we see the needs face to face, and it becomes more real to us. But ACTing alone can frustrate us. It only addresses needs and not the causes.  At this point we must REFLECT. *Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How???*  When we REFLECT on the 6 W’s through prayer and study, we begin to better form our consciences and we gain a better understanding of the needs that are before us and the solutions to those needs. REFLECTing enables us to explore the underlying causes of poverty, violence, homelessness, racism, war, ecological devastation, and other issues. It also allows us to understand the tradition of papal, conciliar, and Episcopal teaching.  The final step is to TRANSFORM the social structures that contribute to suffering and injustice. This is different from ACT in that it does not stop at alleviating symptoms, but it gets at root causes. When we TRANSFORM we change social values, advocate for just causes, boycotting based on social values, change lifestyles, support socially responsible companies, etc. By doing this on behalf of justice, we fulfill the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.  As Pope Francis states in his encyclical *Laudato Si*:  “*Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. For believers, this becomes a question of fidelity to the Creator, since God created the world for everyone. Hence every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged. The principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, is a golden rule of social conduct and ‘the first principle of the whole ethical and social order’. The Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute or inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property. Saint John Paul II forcefully reaffirmed this teaching, stating that ‘God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favoring anyone’. These are strong words. He noted that ‘a type of development which did not respect and promote human rights – personal and social, economic and political, including the rights of nations and of peoples – would not be really worthy of man’. He clearly explained that ‘the Church does indeed defend the legitimate right to private property, but she also teaches no less clearly that there is always a social mortgage on all private property, in order that goods may serve the general purpose that God gave them’. Consequently, he maintained, ‘it is not in accord with God’s plan that this gift be used in such a way that its benefits favor only a few’. This calls into serious question the unjust habits of a part of humanity*.” (*93*) |
| Materials Needed | * Projector and computer * Two or more long lengths of rope (for option 1 below) |
| **Attention Grabber** | **(~5-10 min.) Choose one of the following two options to help teach the kids how to come together as a group. (I am going to try option 2).**  **Amoeba Race (Option 1)**  **Supplies:** Long lengths of rope AND a predetermined track/course.  Divide your group in teams of at least 5 or more. The larger the team size, the more difficult it is. Tie the rope around the entire team at waist level. Make the rope as snug as possible without hurting the students.  Put them on the obstacle course and turn them loose. Teams can be timed during their running of the course, or you can actually have a couple of teams race! The key is to work together as a team to accomplish a common goal. What this activity teaches is that there are obstacles to justice and the path is not always straight or easy to keep in sight but that we must work together to bring about success.  **The Big Squeeze (Option 2)**  Easy game for a big group (minimum 20). Quickly divide into 2-4 teams (more people, more teams) and announce that each team will be racing to squeeze into the shape of the item mentioned. For example: if the leaders yell out the word “football” the teams must squeeze into the shape of a football as would be seen from above. Keep score- first team to 10 wins.  **Good Squeeze Shapes** (Squeeze into the shape of . . .)  California  A dog  A pair of sunglasses  A baseball bat  A shark  A map of the U.S.A.  Your youth group leader  Again, the point being that we have to work together to bring about the change which we seek. |
| **Opening** | **(15 min.)** |
|  | **Prayer**: *Luke 18:18,20-22*  *An official asked Him this question, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”…“You know the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and mother.’” And he replied, “All of these I have observed from my youth.” When Jesus heard this He said to him, “There is still one thing left for you: sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have a treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me.”* |
| **Pre-discussion Presentation** | ~15 min. |
|  | See PowerPoint ***Firecracker Story*** (below)  ***Points:***   1. Point out how awesome God is (start with the beginning of the Creed "I believe in God the Father almighty, the creator of heaven and earth") 2. Since God is so awesome and I am so small and limited capability, what could I offer God? Answer: love, why? Because that is the one thing that we can freely give, even to God and even God will not force us. Still, how can we show that we love God? We can act (not just thoughts but actions) to help his people (*Jas* 2:14-18). 3. Go through some Greek definitions of love (*storge,* *eros, philia, agape*) and point out how the word is overused in our society today. 4. Talk about John 21:15-17 “...do you love me? Feed my sheep” and Matthew 22:34-40 (the two greatest commandments). The benefits when we do charitable acts (those who provide often gain much more than the recipient). 5. We have to think about what we do; talk about how the simplest words of ridicule and/or encouragement can have a large effect (daily interactions, particularly with people who you do not like or are the outcasts). Also think about Examination of Conscience – reflection on what we do. Through these things we transform our lives. 6. Same thing in the larger picture. 7. We must do things to transform the world around us; we must reflect and pray about the things which go on around us – we are not living in a vacuum. 8. Always dump it back in their laps; tie it all to the students. Most have not even had close to these kinds of challenges so no excuse, do something! |
| **Table Talk** | Table Questions (~40 min) |
| These questions will help put the kids through the ART process. They need to understand that they **CAN** do something to help changed the world (remember Maximilian Kolbe).  Get in groups of 5-8 people. Take 10 minutes and answer the questions on your sheets then share within the group. Pick the best from the group, elect a spokesperson and be prepared to share with the large group.  ***Act****:*   1. What charities have you visited to help? 2. Which ones meant more to you than others? Why? 3. How did it make you feel to see these issues face to face? 4. Write down the most impactful charitable act you have ever witnessed or heard/read from a credible source? Put in the context, what happened, and the outcome. 5. When was last time you performed a charitable act. It does not have to be anything sensational, just an act of kindness where you did not expect any reward except maybe a thank you. What was the situation, what did you do, and how did it turn out. If you cannot think of a situation, 6. Who can you think of that epitomizes charitable acts? 7. What charities have you visited to help? 8. Which ones meant more to you than others? Why? 9. How did it make you feel to see these issues face to face? 10. What charitable act can you do this week?   ***Reflect****:*   1. Why are people hungry, homeless, battered, or discriminated against? Why is the environment damaged? (Or a why question that deals with the charities talked about in the Act portion.) 2. Why are these issues concerns of faith? What does our faith have to say about these social issues and their cause? 3. What factors contribute to this social problem? 4. Who gains from the current situation? Who loses? 5. Who has the power? Who doesn’t? 6. Which beliefs and values support the current situation? Which challenge it? Should it be challenged? Why? 7. What does scripture and Catholic social teaching have to say about the situation?   ***Transform****:*  What can you do to change the social situations you have been talking about? (You may have to spur the conversation by mentioning advocating against discrimination (ask them what advocating means), lobbying for just laws, buying or boycotting goods based on social values, changing your lifestyle, etc.) |
| Closing | **Prayer (~5-10 min).**  Prayer intentions…  *Then close with*:  Give us, O Lord, a steadfast heart, which no unworthy affection may drag downwards; give us an unconquered heart, which no tribulation can wear out; give us an upright heart, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside. Bestow upon us also, O Lord our God, understanding to know you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you, and a faithfulness that may finally embrace you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. |
| Reminder | **\*\*\*\* REMEMBER IMPORTANCE OF RECORDING ATTENDANCE!! This is a legal document! Please, write down on your attendance sheet the name of any teen at your table, whether they are on your roll or not.** |
| Attachments | **Below:**   * Firecracker Story * The Art of Social Justice Table |

**Firecracker story**

Why would I tell you that story? A lot of how we think and act is based on our perspective. More on that later.

We are now in our third session. We have taught about the 2 Steps of Social Justice. What are they? Charity and advocacy. Now we are going to take an in depth look Charity and Advocacy. We want you to reflect on what talents you have to not only help provide for the immediate needs of those less fortunate, but more importantly how your talents can change the social structure of the world around you.

Last week we talked about resource distribution and governments in the world. In this country, we live in a democracy. Think for a minute what kind of government do you live in at home? I’ll bet it is a benevolent dictatorship. The parents are the dictators but have the family’s best interest at heart.

I want everyone to take a deep breath of air, hold it for a few seconds, and let it out.

Do you recognize “I believe in God the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth…?” that is the first part of our creed, the fundamental things we as Catholics believe. One of my favorite sayings is that we are (all of us are) imperfect, mere mortal human beings. If you believe that God created heaven and earth, think about that for a minute… created heaven and earth… what in the world… no; what in the universe could I (an imperfect, mere mortal human being) offer God? The only thing we can give him is our love (he owns everything else anyway). A good reference is in Matthew 22: 36-39 where Jesus is questioned by the Pharisees “…Teacher which one of the Commandments is the greatest? He said to him “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind. This is the first and greatest Commandment. The second is like it; you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

In John 21:15-17 (BTW anytime anyone quotes the Bible to you, you should go and perform what I call the 20-20 rule. Go read 20 verses and 20 verses after the quote so it can be put into context. There are multiple examples in the Bible starting in chapter 2 of Genesis where Satan quotes scripture but does so out of context). In John 21:15-17 the context is that Jesus appears to the Disciples at the Sea of Galilee after the Resurrection (after Peter has denied Jesus three times, the crucifixion, and resurrection) Jesus asks Peter three times whether he loves him. Peter replies yes each time and Jesus asks Peter to “feed my lambs”.

From these and many other passages, we can conclude that Jesus wants us to love him in many ways to include by performing charitable acts.

I want everyone to take a deep breath of air, hold it for a few seconds, and let it out.

Today we are going to talk about “ART”. ART is an acronym standing for Act, Reflect, and Transform. You see, in God’s work, it is never good enough to just “superficially” perform anything, especially charitable works. So what is a “charitable act? Websters defines charitable as “generous in giving aid to the needy” or an act of benevolence, good will, or affection”. I would like to add “without any expectation of reward”. So a charitable act does not have to be sensational. A simple word of encouragement or gesture of acceptance can have a tremendously positive affect. Conversely, a single (or multiple) seemingly insignificant comments of ridicule or acts of isolation can be devastating. Also a simple word of encouragement could have a tremendously uplifting effect.

Anyone here ever heard of a man named George Haley? Mr. Haley was the second black student to attend the University of Arkansas law school. After many students tried to intimidate him into leaving, some other students asked him what they could do to help. “Talk to me” was his answer. They did and it made a tremendous impact helping George Haley to graduate. Ultimately Mr. Haley served in the Missouri state senate and in six presidential administrations. His actions also inspired his younger brother Alex to a high standard. Brother Alex is the author of “Roots” In this case what is the cause of the need? Do you think So what was the last time you performed a charitable act?

Here’s another story that you may have heard of. It inspired the song “Skin” by Rascal Flatts. It’s about a 17 year old high school student in Michigan in the mid 90’s named Sarah Beth. You see Sarah Beth has a serious appearance problem that embarrasses her when she goes to school. The summer in between her Junior and Senior year, Sarah Beth is diagnosed with leukemia. As her senior year progresses, so does her chemo and radiation therapy. Does anyone know what Chemo and radiation does to your body? It makes you violently ill and all of your hair falls out. Imagine going to school on Monday with no hair and feeling nausea. This along with people’s reaction to illness, it is not surprising that Sarah Beth is a bit embarrassed and how her friends, teachers and everyone she comes into contact with has an impact on her. There is more. Like most schools, in the spring, there is a big social event. Can anyone guess what that is? Yes, the Prom. Sarah Beth is certain that no one will ask her to the Prom, who would take a bald girl to the prom? However, a young man does ask her. When he shows up at the house to pick her up he is wearing a baseball cap, a bit unusual for a formal date. When Sarah Beth comes into the living room, he takes off his hat to reveal a shaved head. Her date had made this gesture to make her feel less self conscious…and there is more. When they get to the Prom about 20 of her friends have done the same thing.

I want everyone to take a deep breath of air, hold it for a few seconds, and let it out.

Anyone here ever heard of Matthew Kelly? Mr. Kelly is from Australia but now resides in the Chicago area. He is an author (“Rediscovering Catholicism” has sold over 50 million copies), motivational speaker, and business consultant. He was the youngest of nine boys. A neighbor took an interest in him and took him multiple times to local nursing homes (with a box of chocolates). They would approach the front desk and ask who in the nursing home had not been visited lately. Then they would visit the old people. Just before they would leave, the neighbor would ask the nursing home patient “what advice would you give young Matthew”? He uses much of that material in his books and speaking tours today.

As part of his research, Matthew Kelly discovered that as an organization, the Catholic Church feeds more people, clothes more people, houses more people, educates more people, and hospitalizes more people than any other organization in the world. You can be proud of being Catholic and the accomplishments of the church. This gives you an opportunity and a responsibility. God has given you many gifts, much of it by the luck of the draw. We have a responsibility to God to share our gifts with those in need.

Just performing the acts of charity are not enough. Each of these examples are not just “spontaneous” expressions but rather, they are the result of deeper thinking. This thought pattern is the result of reflection; the “R” in ART. The church, bible, and sacraments, especially Confirmation; urge us to stop thinking like the world and start thinking like God and putting ourselves in the place of the people in need. Have any of you ever needed charity? How did that make you feel? As one who needed charity at a point in time in my life I can tell you that I was appreciative and don’t miss this, I was appreciative but also resented those who were being charitable to me. Some of you who represented impoverished nations in last week’s exercise may be able to identify with this.

You may run into many different reactions when trying to do charitable works. Do charitable works anyway but be prepared. After all, you want the works to do some good. As an example, have any of you come into contact with a homeless person? I have run into many people claiming to be homeless asking for money. I always ask why they are homeless. I get the same answer every time; bad luck! If you ask about details of the bad luck and their reaction to the bad luck you can tell which are really in need. But what is more important is that you are taking an interest in the person, usually far more important (and loving) than just giving money or food.

Acts and reflection are still not enough. We need to look at causes of these situations and do what we can to transform the world (permanently remove the need).

There are thousands of examples of charitable acts happening every day if you only know what to look for. I mentioned earlier that the Webster’s definition of charitable act is “generous in giving aid to the needy” or an act of benevolence, good will, or affection” with my addition “without any expectation of reward”. In each of the examples we cited today, who gained from the experience? Hopefully the people in need benefitted. However, I contend that those fulfilling the need also gained and in most cases, more than the ones in need.

Are you ready now to go out and make a difference in the world with charitable acts, reflection and transformation? (ask a couple of times)

I want everyone to take a deep breath of air, hold it for a few seconds, and let it out. I have been asking you to do that periodically during this session. Why? Partially to keep you awake. However I also wanted you to recognize that you are breathing God’s air. Have you thanked God today for the air you breathe or do you just take it for granted. What else do you take for granted? You are breathing God’s air and you are standing on God’s ground; everything we have was given to us by God. Most of us, I dare say all of us in this room are blessed with gifts from God way beyond anything we deserve. Much of it is the luck of the draw. We have a responsibility to share it with those who are less fortunate.

The "ART" of Catholic Social Teaching

* ***A***ct in charity to meet immediate and urgent needs
* ***R***eflect on root causes and Catholic social teaching
* ***T***ransform the root causes of social injustice

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| **ACT** | **REFLECT** | **TRANSFORM** |
| * Act to alleviate the symptoms of social problems.   Examples: Feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, resettle the refugee, reach out to persons in crisis, protect victims of domestic violence, and recycle paper.   * Come in contact with the issue; it takes on a face. * Perform the **corporal works of mercy**: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the imprisoned, visit the sick, and bury the dead.   **Charity**   * Focuses on the need of the individuals, families, and creation. * Looks at the individual situations of need. * Meets immediate and urgent needs. * Addresses painful individual symptoms of social problems * Relies on the generosity of donors. | * Ask why? Why are people hungry, homeless, uprooted, in crisis, battered, or discriminated against? Why is our ecosystem deteriorating? * Listen to those most directly affected – the poor and the marginalized. * Begin to ask deeper questions that challenge the status quo. * Explore the underlying causes of poverty, violence, homelessness, abortion, racism, ecological devastation, and other problems. * What do the Scriptures and Catholic social teaching have to say about these issues and their causes? | * Transform the social structures that contribute to suffering and injustice. * To transform is to take a different kind of action. * Transformative action gets at the root causes; it does not stop at alleviating the symptoms. * Transform our communities and our world through working with empowered low-income people, advocating for just public policies, creating new social structures, and consuming in socially responsible ways.   **Justice**   * Focuses on the rights of individuals, families, and creation. * Analyzes social situations or social structures. * Works for long-term social change. * Addresses the underlying social causes of problems. * Relies on just laws and fair social structures. |