

What type of justice do we need in our world?

This might seem like a strange question – justice is justice and it is the bedrock of a stable democracy ... or is it? Much of the justice we read about and see on our screens is retributive justice - the locking up of people in poor conditions as punishment – this is the justice which underpins our prison system, our youth detention centres, our naming and shaming of celebrities and those who break social and cultural conventions. It is also perversely the justice which legitimises the incarceration of refugees on Manus and Nauru – these people have ‘jumped the queue’, they might be terrorists, they could carry disease, they will be a burden on the public purse. So locking people up, sending them back, forced deportation is a way of ‘doing’ justice and keeping us safe.

But this is not the justice of the Gospel or those who have worked with Gospel hearts in our world. ‘When Jesus speaks of the end of the age, he concludes with an account of the great separation between those deemed to be just and those deemed to be unjust. The decisive factor in the life and death of justice turns out to be acts of generosity and compassion: ‘I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink...’ (bit.ly/2JvSR7s). This of course is restorative justice – Jesus speaks of a world where the poor, homeless and refugee are not punished but helped and with this outreach, justice is achieved. If each human person, created in the image of God, is to be treated with dignity then those things which dehumanise must be challenged – long term imprisonment, violence, racism, abuse, the list is endless.

There are many courageous examples of people who lived this understanding of justice...

Nano Nagle went everyday into the slums of Cork to bring comfort who were deprived of basic human dignity and excluded from society... she was a living witness to justice and equality.



Catherine McAuley refused to believe that poverty could not be overcome. She refused to treat the poor as deserving or a ‘normal’ part of society. In a society that shunned and vilified she chose to show love, compassion and mercy.

Elizabeth Hayes took her missionary heart for the Gospel to Belle Prairie dedicating her life to the missions especially the poor and the African-American people who lived in abject poverty.

St Francis of Assisi embraced the leper and found the true meaning of mercy...

Pope Francis prayer intention for July is “Integrity of Justice”, he urges us to consider our work for justice and to use our voices to challenge narrow understandings of justice in our world today.

As followers of Jesus we are disciples of justice. Jesus’ mission on earth then, has become our mission on earth now.

“Let us pray that those who administer justice may work with integrity, and that the injustice which prevails in the world may not have the last word.”
Pope Francis

REFLECTION

- > The world could use a little more peace, love, and understanding. How can we create a more just world and continue Jesus’ mission today?

Reference: popesprayer.va/the-challenges-facing-humanity-and-assists-the-mission-of-the-church/, peacetheology.net/restorative-justice/6-jesus-and-justice/