

Economic Justice

The Pastoral Letter of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops entitled “Economic Justice for All” is as timely now as it was 30 years ago when it was first published. In other words, the call to economic justice is as strong today as it has ever been.

The economic justice theme encompasses all the other Year of Discernment themes, namely, Immigration, Human Trafficking and Ecological degradation. Many immigrants come to this country trying to build a more economically secure and personally safe future for themselves and their families. The perpetrators of human trafficking are financially using others for economic gains -- by pimping women, by enslaving laborers fearful of deportation or fearful for their own or their family’s lives. Those who are trafficked are often looking for economic security and for a form of social security. Ecological degradation and the misuse of the environment is often the result of economic greed, for example, by reducing production costs by polluting the environment.

For the Year of Discernment presentation on Economic Justice, the Stations of the Cross were used as a framework to illustrate the effects and causes of economic injustice. Further, the reflection on each station was developed as steps in the life cycle (from uterine development to old age and death) of the poor, the marginalized and the disenfranchised. You can see this progression in our outline of the Stations:

Theme of the Stations

Jesus condemned to death --- born into poverty/self-perpetuating system

Jesus bears the cross --- pre-natal life and early education

Jesus falls for the first time --- inequality of educational opportunity

Jesus meets his mother --- single-parent families; extended families

Jesus helped by Simon -- workers impressed into service (e.g. migrant laborers)

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus --- standing in solidarity with the poor

Jesus falls a second time --- discrimination in the work place; wage theft

Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem --- Jesus’ preference for the poor; gender inequality

Jesus falls for the third time --- human trafficking

Jesus stripped of his clothes --- those who are elderly and ill

Jesus nailed to the cross -- homelessness

Jesus dies on the cross --- death of hope; literal disability and death from working conditions

Jesus taken down from the cross --- grandparent and extended family raising children

Jesus is placed in the tomb --- failure of the justice system

Resurrection of Jesus --- seeds and signs of hope in the world; Catholic Charities

Recently, the “Stations of the Cross” tradition has added a 15th Station stressing the hope of the resurrection. We wanted to stress that we the church were a way to bring economic justice into the world. With that in mind, following our Lenten Soup-Supper, St. Ignatius parishioners John and Sondra Herrera, immigrants from Colombia, South America, shared the story of their flight to the US, their gaining refugee status and, ultimately, meaningful work at Catholic Charities. They, in turn, are helping other immigrants (John) and people with housing crisis (Sondra) live in hope. John and Sandra exemplify hope overcoming economic *injustice* and turning it into economic *justice*.

Please read the Statement of the US Catholic Bishops – A Catholic Framework for Economic Justice – in preparation for the year of Discernment Retreat on June 6th at the Loyola Jesuit Center from 8:30 am – 2:00 pm.