

Engaging

Read the Mercy reflection on Justice and reflect on what it says on right relationships.

Read each of the following scriptural texts:

- Hosea 4: 1-3
- Amos 5:24
- Psalm 9:8
- Psalm 36:6
- Matt 5:6 – 5.10
- Matt 6:33
- Matt 23:23

What do the scripture passages and the words of Catherine McAuley reveal to you about the nature of God's justice?

Reflecting

Take a moment to make yourself comfortable and allow yourself to be still.

Recall a time when you have experienced or witnessed something that wasn't fair or just? What did the injustice look like, feel like? What was the impact on you?

Recall a time and place when you witnessed or experienced a just action? Describe what you saw or felt. Why was it just and what was the impact on you?

Justice can require courage but it does bring about right relationships.

Acting

How do you create fairness and justice in your current relationships and daily interactions with others through your words, actions and attitude?

Can you identify an individual or group whose works, attitude or actions have helped bring about a more just society? How does this example inspire you to act justly?

Are there any laws that you consider unjust?

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness."

Growing

There are consequences to making a commitment to justice; it takes courage to commit.

In what areas do you need to grow as a person to be able to recognise, respond, speak out and act wherever you see injustice?

Jesus inspired us to interact justly with all of God's creation.



Mercy Education Values



JUSTICE



Mercy Education
www.mercy.edu.au



Justice

Catherine McAuley's advice in the face of injustice was "to speak as your mind directs and to act with more courage when the 'mammon [false god] of unrighteousness' is in question." She saw the plight of the Dublin poor and their lack of access to the education that was available to the wealthy. It was her determination to set right such inequities and to find justice for young women at risk that impelled her to use her considerable inheritance for the House of Mercy in Baggott Street. This ambitious project was her way of providing vulnerable young people with an education and the skills to make their own way in life. She challenged those with resources and skills to join her in this work of mercy and justice.

In the gospel tradition that nourished Catherine, justice is about righteousness or right ordering of relationships. The gospel has its roots in the faith traditions of Israel. We turn to these writings to discover what nourished the faith of Jesus of Nazareth and his commitment to justice and so to the right ordering of every aspect of life. The prophets of Israel use two key concepts in their call for justice. The first relates to the justice system: it is to be accessible to all who have a grievance and should be characterised by right judgement and fair dealings. Bribery and corruption in the law courts are condemned in the strongest terms. The second concept is about right ordering of relationships (especially of human/divine and human/human relationships, and occasionally of human/other-than-human relationships as in Hosea 4:1-3. "Righteousness" often translates this justice concept.

To get a sense of the prophetic call to justice, you may like to read the prophecy of Amos. Feel the passion of Amos as he presents God's plea: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). In the Psalms, God "judges the world with righteousness" and the peoples "with equity" (Psalm 9:8). God's

justice and righteousness embrace the whole of the Earth community: "Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your judgments are like the great deep; you save humans and animals alike (Psalm 36:6)."

The gospel notion of justice or righteousness is to be understood in light of Israel's prophetic and wisdom traditions. In the gospel of Matthew, it is a recurring theme. Those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness" and those who "suffer persecution for the sake of justice" are said to be "blessed" (Matt 5:6, 10). Jesus' followers are "to seek first the kingdom of God and God's righteousness..." (Matt 6:33). There is a telling warning towards the end of Matthew's gospel when religious leaders are critiqued for their lack of justice: "[Y]ou tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (Matt 23:23). The word used here for justice can also mean right judgement or decision. The pairing of justice and mercy as "weightier matters of the law" provides sufficient grounds to claim justice as a key aspect of our Mercy heritage.

Veronica Lawson RSM



MERCY INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

