

THE MORALITY OF OUR ECONOMY



At this writing our nation is six weeks away from the national elections. While many of us may have our own individual issue by which we assess a candidate, collectively the country's issue is the economy.

There are many lenses through which to view the economy: Some may be concerned with poverty:

Here are the facts about poverty in Oregon (2011 data):

- Percentage of Oregonians living in poverty: 18%
- Women: 18%
- Children: 23%
- African-Americans: 30%
- Latinos: 30%
- Asian-Americans: 19%
- American Indians: 30%

Some may be concerned with protecting the middle class ("middle" is the 40th - 60th Percentile):

Federal Level for Financial Security for a Family of 4 (2012): \$44, 226

Median Household Income in Oregon (2010): \$46,536

50th Percentile for a Family of 4 (2010): \$60,395

40th - 60th Percentile for a Family of 4 (2010): \$48,000 - \$74,144

Some may be concerned with protecting the poor:

Minimum Wage Job earns: \$15,000

Federal Poverty Level for Family of 4 (2010): \$22,113

Bottom 15.1% for a Family of 4 (2010): less than \$22, 113

Bottom 20th Percentile for a Family of 4 (2010): less than \$26,685

Federal Level for Financial Security for a Family of 4 (2012): \$44, 226

40th Percentile for a Family of 4 (2010): \$48,000

Others may be concerned with the wealthy:

Top 5% for a Family of 4 (2010): \$200,354

In today's reading, Jesus says to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Affluence, in and of itself, is a blessing (all gifts come from God). The sin is not getting rich but getting rich *at the expense of others*, legally or illegally. The sin is not in having wealth but in having wealth that diverts our attention from God and our call to build the Kingdom of God here on earth.

This election, we will be well served to reflect upon the message from the U.S. Bishops, "All economic life should be shaped by moral principles. Economic choices and institutions must be judged by how they protect or undermine the life and dignity of the human person, support the family, and serve the common good." (United States Catholic Conference, *A Catholic Framework for Economic Life*)

(Readings for 28th Sunday of Ordinary Time)



Office of Life, Justice, and Peace