

A Justice Ministry I

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)

August 1, 2021

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This past May, I mentioned that we were in the process of forming a Justice Ministry at St. Matthias Church. For all the weekend homilies of August, this will be our theme.

Before deciding to dedicate 5 whole weekends worth of homilies to the topic of justice and the formation of a Justice Ministry, I was unclear as to what would be the connection to our Scripture Readings, which are predetermined by the Lectionary. It didn't take long to realize that we are currently reading from John 6 until the end of August, which is called the 'Bread of Life' Discourse. It just so happens that the name of the local Faith-Based Community Organizing group in Columbus is BREAD. BREAD has invited St. Matthias Church to be part of their network. So, for the remaining weekends of the Bread of Life Discourse this month, I want to address the following 5 questions: 1) Why a Justice Ministry? 2) What is BREAD? 3) What does Mary say about justice? 4) Who should be interested in this ministry? And 5) What a Justice Ministry would look like here concretely? This week, we will address the first question, 'Why a Justice Ministry?'

1) A Justice Ministry would complement our charitable works. This parish has a strong tradition of helping those in need through charitable works-meals and lunches for the homeless, clothes and toy drives, financially supporting local charities, and helping the poor in many other ways throughout the year. All of these activities are important and we intend to keep many of them. However, is charity alone enough? Charity may make us feel good, but does it really make those on the receiving end feel equally as good? This is where justice comes in. Justice doesn't simply ask the question

‘what can I do to help people,’ but ‘why are these people in need of so much help in the first place?’ It attempts to get to the root causes of their situations, which often can be traced back to an injustice. Whereas charity can help the individual, justice can change and improve systems. We need both.

2) *A Justice Ministry would help us put our faith into action.* We all know that our worship of God at church should have implications for the way we live our lives. Unfortunately, there is often a disconnect between the two. In fact, the gap between the church and the world continues to grow as the world becomes more secular and the church becomes more exclusive. A justice ministry bridges the gap by challenging us to apply our faith to some of the concrete issues of today, such as affordable housing, gun violence, and poverty.

3) *A Justice Ministry would connect us to our neighborhood.* This neighborhood has changed greatly over the decades. Whether we like these changes or not, the fact is we are a Catholic Church located in this neighborhood. We are called to be the presence of Christ here. A justice ministry at the Church would also be a good way to connect on a deeper level to our school families, who do live in this neighborhood and do have real concerns for themselves and their children.

There are many other reasons in answer to the question, ‘Why a Justice Ministry?’ These are just three initial ones- *a Justice Ministry would complement our charitable works, a Justice Ministry would help us put our faith into action, and a Justice Ministry would connect us to our neighborhood.* Next week, we will discuss the question ‘What is BREAD?’ For today, let us conclude with this question for personal reflection: what in me resists justice work?