



Matthew 25

...whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine,
you did for me.

The Social Ministry Commission Newsletter
of St. Mary's Catholic Center, College Station, Texas

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Fair Trade

Getting Christmas Gifts Reflecting our Christian Values

By Clotilde Pichon, member of St. Mary's Social Ministry Commission and Work of Human Hands Sale coordinator

For many years now, St. Mary's Social Ministry Commission has been sponsoring a Work of Human Hands Sale in the Activity Center the first weekend of December. Not only does this give our community an opportunity to see and buy beautiful handcrafts and delicious gourmet foods from around the world, but this offers a shopping alternative that reflects the values of our faith by putting our dollars toward helping the artisans and producers of these fair traded items.

Fair Trade and the Catholic Social Teaching (from www.crsfairtrade.org/)

Fair trade is a progressively growing international movement with fair trade certified products increasingly available to American consumers. This alternative commerce brings the goods directly to markets in North America and Europe, thereby eliminating middlemen and maximizing profits where they are most needed. The artisans or growers receive a just wage for their products, providing for their basic needs, education for their children and healthcare for their family. In addition a percentage of the profits serves their communities through micro-loans and training. Different Fair Trade organizations certify the products by ensuring they comply with standard sustainable environmental practices and safe work environments.

In their Pastoral Letter of 1986, *Economic Justice for All*, the US Bishops invite Catholics to ask themselves three questions about all of our economic activities: "What does the economy do for people? What does it do to people? And how do people participate in it?" They remind us that in our Catholic tradition the economy must meet the material needs of every member of our human family, and the moral demands of social justice and solidarity. This is exactly what Fair Trade offers -- an opportunity to follow the Catholic Social Teaching on economic justice:

- Fair Trade is rooted in respect for human dignity, since its core principles (fair pricing, direct purchasing, and long-term relationships) all reflect a commitment to uphold the human dignity of small-scale producers.

- We are called to show special concern for the most vulnerable members of our human family and take concrete actions on their behalf. Fair Trade allows us to exercise this preferential option for the poor through the choices we make about purchasing fairly traded items, helping lift vulnerable producers out of poverty by providing fair wages for their work.

- Fair Trade promotes the common good because it is not directed solely toward the attainment of financial goals, but brings producers, business owners and consumers together in a "progressively expanding chain of solidarity".

- In traditional trade, consumers have no way to know about the producers of the items they are buying because of the numerous intermediaries between the producers and them. Fair Trade changes that. Fair Trade companies here in the United States work directly with Fair Trade producers all around the world. So when you buy Fair Trade coffee, chocolate or handcrafts, you enter a network of direct relationships between consumers and low-income farmers and artisans, a network of global solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need around the world.

- Fair Trade applies the principle of subsidiarity in promoting participation of growers and artisans in the ownership and management of the enterprises where they work as well as the creation of worker-run cooperatives.

- Fair Trade demonstrates a dual concern for the environment and the people who rely on it for their livelihood. Farmers are trained to practice sustainable agriculture, provided with financial assistance encouraging the adoption of

techniques which preserve local habitats and thus practice responsible stewardship of natural resources

These themes of Catholic Social Teaching represent the foundation of a truly just economic order and by buying fair traded products we have the opportunity to put our faith into action. You can make your Christmas shopping meaningful by going to the Work of Human Hands Sale on the first weekend of

December at St. Mary's. Joanne Kratz, a Catholic Relief Services Fair Trade Ambassador, commented that with fair traded Christmas gifts a person gives twice: "You give to the person who you buy the gift for and the one that produced it."

"Better pricing [through Fair Trade] for our baskets has helped us send our children to school. Before, we had to weave all night to pay school fees."
(Teni Ayamga, a basket weaver from Ghana, whose handmade items are sold through CRS Fair Trade catalog)



Did You Know? (from www.poverty.com)

- In 2005 close to 50% of humanity lives on less than \$2.50 a day and at least 80% on less than \$10 a day.
- The poorest 40 % of the world's population accounts for 5 % of global income, while the richest 20 % accounts for 75%.
- About 72 million children of primary school age in the developing world were not in school in 2005.
- Some 1.1 billion people in developing countries have inadequate access to water and 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation.
- 50% of the world's children (1 billion) live in poverty; 33% are without adequate shelter, 20% with no access to safe water; 15% with no access to health services.
- 15 million children are orphaned due to HIV/AIDS.
- Every day, almost 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes--one child every five seconds.
- Every year there are 350–500 million cases of malaria with 1 million fatalities, 90% in Africa and 80% are children.

We must emphasize and give prominence to the primacy of the human person in the production process, the primacy of the human person over things.
(Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 1981)



What are Catholics Doing to Fight Global Poverty?

Catholic Relief Services (CRS): (from www.crs.org/) "*Giving Hope to a World of Needs*"

CRS was founded in 1943 by the US Catholic Bishops to serve World War II survivors in Europe and since then has expanded to reach more than 100 million people in more than 100 countries on five continents. Its mission is to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas in the spirit of the Catholic Social Teaching, preserving and upholding the sacredness and dignity of all human life, and fostering charity and justice. CRS promote human development by responding to major emergencies, fighting disease and poverty, nurturing peaceful and just societies and educate US Catholics in living their faith in solidarity with their brothers and sisters around the world through programs like the Work of Human Hands Sale.

Catholics Confront Global Poverty: (from www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp_index.shtml)

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and CRS call all Catholics to join in the fight against global poverty. By visiting the website, Catholics can learn about the issues and become advocate to end hunger, disease, conflict, and other issues that affect the lives of our brothers and sisters worldwide.

What Can You Do?

Pray: Our faith tells us our prayers make a difference and that they are heard. Praying does help us and others. Pray that the world economy may be managed according to the principles of justice and equity, taking account of the real needs of peoples, especially the poorest.

Educate Yourself: Visit the Work of Human Hands Sale and take advantage of the opportunity to learn about the people behind the products as you shop. You can also learn more by visiting www.serrv.org/ArtisansFarmers.aspx.

Learn about the issues: the role of agribusiness in the global food system (www.ncrlc.com, National Catholic Rural Life Conference), global poverty issues (www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/index.shtml, Office of International Justice and Peace of the US Bishops), hunger issues in the world (www.bread.org/) or world wide health issues (www.crs.org/health/, Catholic Relief Services)

Join With Others: Volunteer with the Social Ministry Commission at St. Mary's. For more information contact Gerry at stmarysocialministrycommission@gmail.com

Take Action: The bigger international issues are mirrored in local conditions. Volunteer your services to different local organizations serving the needs of the community through ASAP (contact Matt at ASAPvolunteer@gmail.com) or contact Rachael Cadena, St. Mary's Director of Social Ministries at rcadena@aggiecatholic.org, so she can help you find where you feel called to serve or tell you about the mission trips organized by the parish.

The dignity of the individual and the demands of justice require, particularly today, that economic choices do not cause disparities in wealth to increase in an excessive and morally unacceptable manner, and that we continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone.
(Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 2009)