

SPIRITUAL TOPICS for REFLECTION

(Adapted from Catholic Social Teachings)

I. Dignifying Human Life

- How does your group enhance the life and dignity of people? How do your structures diminish or destroy human life? What rules/customs might need to be reconsidered in order to honor other's dignity?
- What norms exist for how to interact (or not interact) with people who are marginalized? Think of someone who broke with convention in order to dignify another person. How was s/he treated? When have you gone against a norm to dignify a person who is marginalized?
- What is the difference between giving charitably to someone and working with people so they can participate fully in society?
- How can you collaborate with people who are marginalized? What does it mean to empower others?

II. Community Building

- Who is your "neighbor?" Who isn't? How can someone unlike you be your neighbor?
- Who are the social outcasts in your community? How does the community treat people outside of its mainstream?
- What does it mean to act neighborly toward someone? How can you see and treat others as neighbors?
- What are your prejudices? In what ways are your needs more important than others'?
- How can the values we're raised with extend beyond our families, so that we treat those in our community as we treat those in our families?
- Who are the victims among us, who deserve neighborliness?
- How can the "good Samaritan" be applied to your community?

III. Human Rights and Responsibilities

- What are our basic rights? Are some people's rights more important than others'?
- What are our responsibilities to others' needs? Why do we neglect them?
- Who are the poor and neglected in your community?
- Is freedom possible when people are in need?
- Does charity counterbalance an unequal distribution of wealth? Is charity a sufficient way to be responsible for others' needs?
- If there are adequate resources available for basic needs, what rights do people have to these resources? What responsibilities do we have regarding these resources?

IV. People Who are Poor & Vulnerable

- In what way is help for the poor and vulnerable an act of spirituality?
- Have you experienced poverty or vulnerability? (describe) How did others reach out to you to assist you with your needs?
- How can a person's actions to maintain his/her wealth serve to exploit the poor?

(People Who are Poor & Vulnerable, cont'd)

- How do/can you assist people who are poor/vulnerable? How does this change the circumstances that made them poor/vulnerable? How does it change you? How does it impact the community?
- What are the limitations of doing *for* people? What is missing if you see it as a one-way donation of your resources to those without? Discuss “pity.”
- How can/do people who are poor/vulnerable help themselves? How can you participate in this? What are their assets in this process?

V. Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

- Is worth defined by the work one does? Why is some work more valuable than others?
- Why are some workers not paid a living wage? Is this appropriate?
- Should industries sustain workers, or workers sustain industries? Should our economy sustain our needs or should we sustain the economy? Are these dualisms appropriate?
- Morally, should economic decisions serve all people, including the poor?
- What rights should workers have? Do our laws/customs protect the rights of workers?
- How do we exploit workers? Should workers have a right to organize against it?
- How can you dignify the exploited workers in your community?
- How important is dignity to the work you choose to do? What work would you do, if you felt it was perceived with more dignity?

VI. Solidarity

- What is the difference between doing *for* people who are oppressed & doing *with* them?
- Who defines the needs of others? How can you see the needs of others as they see them? How do you invite others to express their own reality? In what ways can communication work *against* this happening?
- Do you believe that all people are interrelated and interdependent? How do the lived experiences of others unlike yourself impact your reality?
- What forces hinder us from seeing ourselves as interrelated? Where have you seen an “us vs. them” mentality perpetuated? What role does the media have in this?
- How can you act in solidarity with people unlike yourself, especially poor people in other parts of the world?

VII. Environmental concerns

- Do we have a moral/spiritual mandate to take care of the environment?
- What is our responsibility in the here and now, as it relates to future generations?
- What economic decisions stand to cause harm to the environment and other divine creations?
- How do environmental decisions differentially impact segments of the community (business people, poor people, residents of affected areas, etc.?)
- What are the primary environmental and economic concerns of your community? What do you believe the priorities *should* be? How can you advocate for these?