Ascension Sunday: Social Justice Examen

Ascension Sunday reminds us that although Jesus is no longer present on earth in the tangible way the disciples experienced, he is present and alive in the witness of his followers. I love that question in the first reading: “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?” In other words: ***look around you!*** The presence of Christ is in your midst.

To witness is two-fold: it’s both *what* we witness with our eyes and *how* we witness with our lives. As we look at our world, how do the injustices that weaken the body of Christ around the world inform and *transform* how we continue the ministry of Christ in our world? How do we, as a parish, live out the ministry of Christ as a faith that does justice?

I am reminded of Pope Francis’ invitation at the beginning of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy: “Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own…”

The social justice ministry of our parish is an integral way we witness the ongoing presence of Christ, and particularly his ministry to the vulnerable, in our world. Over the past year, the committee has largely focused its efforts on immigration and refugee work. As we approach a new fiscal year on July 1st, we’d like to prayerfully discern as a parish community what areas to focus on this year. Through a very brief Ignatian Examen prayer, we invite you to open the eyes of your heart and discern how God is inviting us as a parish to be witness. As a committee, we realize we can’t tackle every issue, but we want our work to reflect the witness of our community at large, and so we will take to heart the suggestions we receive in this process.

I will offer a few reflective prompts with some quiet in between for reflection. I invite you to close your eyes as I do so, to aid in your prayer.

**As we begin this prayer time, ask for the grace to see the world through God’s eyes…** *(brief pause)*

**When you consider the suffering and wounds of humanity, what groups of people, situations, and issues rise up in your heart?** *(pause 45 sec)*

**Now ask yourself, how does God feel when God looks upon these people who are in pain? What is God desiring for them?** *(pause 45 sec)*

I invite you now to open your eyes and write on the cards provided at the end of each pew, one or two things that came up for you. What issues do you feel like are the most pertinent for our parish to focus education, advocacy and service efforts on this year? On the card, please also leave your name and contact information if you’d like to be included in the efforts of our committee.

(*Allow time for people to write*)

Thank you for taking part in this prayerful process. The ushers will collect the cards during the announcements.