



Service Context for Discussion

Jesus came “to bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives and to set the downtrodden free” (Luke 4:18). In his Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est* Pope Benedict XVI writes, “The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her threefold responsibility: proclaiming the Word of God, celebrating the sacraments, and exercising the ministry of charity.” Through serving the poor, the homeless, the marginalized, and other afflicted people and families in the community we bring the love of Christ to the world. Christian service is the expression of our faith through our deeds and is integral to our life as believers in Jesus Christ. Topics for discussion may include the ways we as an archdiocese from our youth to our elders, express our concern for the dignity of all people as we actively pursue peace, justice and advocacy for those in need. The rich social teaching of the Church provides seven themes that can be a guide for the areas of discussion.

Service

Key Elements of the Life of the Church in the Archdiocese of Washington

Reflection Questions

1. What are examples of the Church's efforts in this area that are bearing fruit?
2. What are some areas where more might be done to strengthen the work of the Church?
3. What practical suggestions do you have?
4. What are the four key elements you identify as priorities?

1. For Call to Family, Community and Participation, the Church:
 1. Is sensitive to the needs of individuals and families when it schedules Masses, ministry, programs and events; and,
 2. Opens its doors to community groups (e.g. Alcoholic Anonymous, Scouts) for meetings and activities.
2. For Rights and Responsibilities, the Church:
 1. Educates its members about Catholic Social teaching through homilies, special programs, and formal discussion of encyclicals and church documents; and,
 2. Draws attention to important local, state, and federal legislation in light of Catholic Social teaching and supports its members to advocate on behalf of legislation consistent with the teachings of the church.
3. For Options for the Poor and Vulnerable, the Church and its members:
 1. Sponsor and support local food banks, blood drives and other programs to serve those in need in the community, including the working poor; and,
 2. Actively engage in efforts to foster respect for immigrants and to secure their basic human rights.
4. For Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers, the Church and its organization members:
 1. Educate and train individuals as they seek to develop their God-given talents and skills to serve others and support their families; and,
 2. Respect the inherent right of individuals to labor and be justly rewarded for their efforts and recognize the dignity derived from such endeavors; and,
 3. Recognize and respect the important work of mothers and fathers as they strive to raise responsible, caring children who will become the future productive citizens of our society.
5. For Solidarity, members of the Church:
 1. Respond generously to archdiocesan and national appeals for aid to the poor and marginalized; and,
 2. Participate in peace, justice and advocacy efforts, pro-life activities, voter registration drives, letter writing campaigns and parish twinning missions.
6. For Care for God's Creation, the Church:
 1. Advocates for respect of all life and recognizes that human life begins at conception; and,
 2. Calls for responsible stewardship of the environment and respect for all of God's creatures.
7. For Life and Dignity of the Human Person, the Church and its members:
 1. Serve the spiritual, emotional, social and physical needs of the poor and the ill, the young and the old, the native born and the immigrant, and the individual and the family from pre-conception until after natural death; and,
 2. Respond when invited to volunteer to serve their fellow human beings through service programs and parish ministries.

Others?