



EVERYDAY JUSTICE

365 Reflections

ALAN J. TALLEY
SCOTT HOLZKNECHT

saint mary's press

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Dedication

To my loving wife, Emily, and my two wonderful children, Rachel and Alex, who keep me young and laughing. And to my parents, Ed and Donna, whose example of faith and love has always inspired me.

—Alan J. Talley

This hope for justice is dedicated to Dawn Dones and Joe Grant . . . lanterns along the pathway.

—Scott Holzknecht

Introduction

You are being called.

In *Everyday Justice*, you will explore the themes of Catholic Social Teaching in the hope of raising awareness and moving to action. We hope that this book, a daily guide for insight, reflection, prayer, and action, may inspire you to live a life of justice.

Begin each day by reading the quotation. Then read through the reflection on that quotation. Spend a few minutes thinking about the reflection and then offer the prayer to God. Finally, consider the action step as a concrete way to put your faith into action.

This book is organized so that each day of the week focuses on a specific theme of Catholic Social Teaching. These themes are life and dignity of the human person; call to family, community, and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; and care for God's creation.

The quotations used in *Everyday Justice* are taken from the Scriptures, Church documents, and individuals who inspire us to live a life of justice. It is our hope that *Everyday Justice* will increase your awareness of God's call for justice and your role in fulfilling that call.

**“So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.”**

(Genesis 1:27)

As a new year begins, we often take time to reflect on ourselves both physically and spiritually. We may even make resolutions to improve ourselves during the coming year. But this year ask yourself: What do I notice when I look at myself in the mirror? Do I tend to focus on the hair out of place or the imperfections I see in my face? Or do I see an image of God as the passage in Genesis states? Once we are able to look beyond the imperfections and see God's own image in ourselves, we will be able to begin looking beyond other's imperfections and see God's image in them as well.

God, help me as I begin this new year to see the beauty of your own image in myself and all those around me.

Today each time you see your reflection, remind yourself that you were truly made in God's image.

“Hence the family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing in God’s love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church His bride.”

(Pope John Paul II, *On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*)

Do you ever think of your family as having a mission? God does. As Pope John Paul II writes, the family’s mission is centered on love. Our families find their true purpose in the way they reflect God’s love and work toward safeguarding and promoting that love. As members of a family, each one of us is called to work daily toward building up the love among its members. This love is not just about hugs and kisses; it is also about respecting and honoring one another.

Lord, bless my family so that we may grow in love for one another.

Offer to do something unexpectedly nice for a family member today.

**“Do not wait for leaders; do it alone,
person to person.”**

(Blessed Mother Teresa)

Blessed Mother Teresa was a real example of someone who lived this quote. It is hard to imagine her passing by someone lying facedown suffering in the street and saying she would help them once there was an official organization or government program to do so! She was known for simply bending down and offering help. What if we all acted like Blessed Mother Teresa? What would the world look like? We do not have to wait; we can begin today to make that image a reality. It is up to each of us to stop and lend a hand whenever and wherever we see the need.

God of compassion, open my heart so that I may see the needs around me and lend a hand.

Go out of your way today to help someone in need.

“For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat.”

(Exodus 23:10–11)

Can you imagine what the world would be like if everybody shared their food with the poor for an entire year? No child would go to bed hungry. No one would starve to death. The imbalance in the food supply, where some countries are overflowing with food while others are struggling with next to nothing, would be corrected. Everyone would have “food security,” meaning enough food to sustain their health and life. Food security is not simply a good idea—it is a fundamental right of every human being, and we are called to support the food security of every individual.

Bountiful Lord, you created a world with an abundance of food. Help us to simply share it freely with one another.

Visit the Catholic Relief Services Web site to learn about food security and ways you can help.

“Child labour, in its intolerable forms, constitutes a kind of violence that is less obvious than others but it is not for this reason any less terrible.”

*(Compendium of the Social Doctrine
of the Church)*

The Church is careful not to say all child labor is “intolerable.” This means cleaning your room and mowing the lawn are still allowed. What the Church is referring to is those instances where children are used and abused as a form of cheap labor. Take, for instance, children in developing countries being forced to work all day long for only a few pennies in horrendous factories called sweatshops. One way we can begin to fight the intolerable forms of child labor is by avoiding products and services provided by businesses that abuse children.

Lord, when I shop, help me make choices that support the rights of children.

Search online for a list of companies that use sweatshops to produce their products and choose not to support those companies by boycotting their products.

“[The Magi] saw and adored the Child, small in size, powerless to help others, incapable of speech, and in naught different to the generality of human children.”

(Pope Leo the Great)

Today is the traditional date for the Feast of Epiphany, the day we celebrate the Magi coming to visit the newborn Jesus. In one of his homilies from this feast day, Pope Leo reminds us of how Jesus appeared as any other newborn child, helpless and in need of others. Think about how dependent the Son of God was on Mary and Joseph and the heartfelt care they gave to him. This common experience of needing others is one of the things that bind us all together with our Savior as one human family.

Lord Jesus, on this feast day we celebrate how the Magi came to worship and adore you. Let my prayers always join theirs in adoration of you.

Take time to read Matthew 2:1–12 and reflect on how the newborn Jesus depended on others to care for him.

**“The earth is the LORD’s and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it.”**

(Psalm 24:1)

How would you feel if you loaned someone your cell phone and he or she ran up the bill and eventually broke the phone? You would surely be disappointed to say the least. We all have been loaned something even greater than a cell phone—the earth. As the Psalmist reminds us, the earth belongs to God. We are only borrowing it to enjoy and sustain our lives. As good borrowers, we are called to take care of this wonderful gift. One way is through recycling. By recycling we give back what we have taken from the earth so that it may be useful once again.

God, our Creator, thank you for loaning the earth to us. Forgive us for the times we have failed to treat it properly, and help us do better in the future.

Make an extra effort today to recycle the items you can recycle.

“Euthanasia and assisted suicide can appear a reasonable and even compassionate solution to the suffering of individuals and families struggling with illness or the dying process. Yet these are not real solutions—they do not solve human problems, but only take the lives of those most in need of unconditional love.”

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life)

Have you ever been by the side of a loved one who was in pain and dying? You naturally want nothing more than to take away her or his suffering. But as the bishops state, going to the extreme of assisted suicide is not a valid option. Ending the suffering by taking away one's life destroys her or his first and most fundamental right as a person created by God—right to life! Instead we are called to offer our loving support.

God of mercy, when a loved one is suffering and dying, grant me the grace to love and walk the journey with him or her.

Make plans today to visit a nursing home with your family, friends, or youth group.

“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. . . . Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.”

(Eleanor Roosevelt)

World problems can seem so overwhelming at times. How do I fix world hunger or develop economic systems that respect the poor? One person alone can seem so small, yet Eleanor Roosevelt reminds us that world problems are not solved with worldwide solutions. They are resolved step-by-step in small ways. When each individual respects the rights of others, only then will the world begin to change.

Lord, I am small, yet my desire for justice is great. Give me the courage to do the things I can to change the world one step at a time.

Take time today to go for a walk and make each step you take a prayer for justice.

**“Do not find fault before you investigate;
examine first, and then criticize.”**

(Sirach 11:7)

Have you ever jumped to the wrong conclusion only to have to apologize later? It can not only be embarrassing, but you can also hurt others in the process. The author of the Book of Sirach offers us some sound advice when we consider our rights and responsibilities toward protecting human dignity. We should begin with the benefit of the doubt, assume that people are good. If we sense that something is wrong, then we should “investigate.” Only after we have complete information should we use our voice to speak out and call for change. Protecting human dignity takes courage, but we have the responsibility to be accurate when we do speak out.

Lord, help me be prudent when I speak today.

Think carefully about the situation before you criticize anything today.

“In using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others.”

(The Church in the Modern World)

Learning to share is one of the first things we learn as toddlers. Yet as we get older, sharing our possessions goes beyond simply lending someone a toy. In light of our need to care for the poor, sharing means seeing our possessions as a means for building up the common good. Here are some questions you can ask yourself about how well you share: Do I use my possessions selfishly or in a way that is helpful to those in need? Which of my possessions can I use to benefit the needy? Which of my possessions do I no longer need and can give away to the poor?

Lord Jesus, give me a generous heart so that the possessions you have blessed me with may be used to help others.

Go through your belongings today and donate those you no longer need.

“Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work.”

(Aristotle)

It is not uncommon for a student's highest grades to be in the subjects he or she likes the best. The same is true for most workers. If we enjoy what we are doing, then we tend to be more productive. Part of the dignity of work is our ability to find enjoyment in our job and see our work as participation in God's creation. What profession do you want to pursue when you get older? How might it bring you pleasure? How do you see that work as participation in God's creation?

God, our Creator, let the work that I do be joined with yours.

During the day, notice the different jobs people have and try to connect that work with God's creative work.

“When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”

(Leviticus 19:33–34)

Have you ever moved to a new city or town? It can be both scary and lonely. Anyone who has ever been the newcomer can understand why God gave the law about welcoming outsiders in Leviticus. In giving the law, God reminds the Israelites that they themselves have been the newcomer before. Just like the Israelites, we too are called to remember how it felt to be a newcomer when we ask ourselves these questions: What do I do to make new students feel welcome at school? What do I do to help the new teen at church feel part of the parish?

Lord, help me be welcoming to those newly joining my community.

Discuss with your principal or pastor ways you can organize a group or join an existing one that welcomes new teens to the community.

“And how can we remain indifferent to the prospect of an ecological crisis which is making vast areas of our planet uninhabitable and hostile to humanity?”

(Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church)

Have you ever noticed how young children will cover their eyes when they are frightened? As we get older, we realize that simply covering our eyes will not make what is frightening us go away. The Church reminds us that when it comes to the enormous and frightening challenges we have in caring for God’s creation, we cannot simply cover our eyes and hope it all goes away. The destruction of wetlands and rain forests, global warming, and animal extinctions are not only about respecting God’s creation but about our survival as well. We are called to open our eyes and confront the problems.

Lord, the effects of humankind’s choices have taken a toll on the environment. Help us work to reverse those effects and set in motion a time of renewal.

Go online and learn more about the importance of the rain forests and how they are being threatened.

“We have been engaged in this struggle for 32 years. We are willing to continue our efforts for as long as it takes to secure the safety of all the unborn. . . . We shall not go away. We shall only grow stronger and more determined to make certain that some day a human life within the womb will not be considered a choice to be made, but a child to be loved.”

(Archbishop Wilton Gregory)

Just like a marathon runner, working for justice takes endurance. Rarely does justice happen overnight. As Archbishop Gregory states, the struggle for the rights of the unborn has been waged for over three decades. But when you have passion and stand on principle, you cannot simply give up; you must continue to fight.

Heavenly Creator, give me the passion and endurance to join the fight for justice for the unborn.

Call your local church or diocesan office and ask how you can be a part of Right to Life efforts.

“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’ ”

(Genesis 2:18)

In this passage, we see God affirming the social nature of people and the goodness of marriage. In God’s desire for our good, God created man and woman to work together as partners taking care of creation and one another. So from the beginning, married couples have been called to work toward the common good not only for themselves but also for their children, society, and all of creation.

Good and gracious God, thank you for blessing humankind with the gift of marriage. Please bless all married couples, that they may truly work together as partners for the good of all.

Observe different married couples today, asking yourself the following question: In what ways do they work together?

“Consistency in behaviour shows what one truly believes and is not limited only to things strictly church-related or spiritual but involves men and women in the entirety of their life experience and in the context of all their responsibilities.”

*(Compendium of the Social Doctrine
of the Church)*

The Church’s call for consistency in our behavior ultimately connects what we celebrate in Church on Sunday with what we say and do during the week. For example, each Sunday we hear about our responsibility to love and take care of one another. So if we are to be consistent, then we must ask ourselves these questions: In what ways do I love others? Am I consistent? Is there someone specific that I need to be more loving toward?

Loving God, help me connect the message of love I hear each Sunday with how I live my life during the week.

At the end of the day, take time to pray to God with thanksgiving for the times you were kind and loving toward others, and ask God for help in the areas where you need to grow.

“Even though the poor are often rough and unrefined, we must not judge them from external appearances nor from the mental gifts they seem to have received. On the contrary, if you consider the poor in the light of faith, then you will observe that they are taking the place of the Son of God who chose to be poor.”

(Saint Vincent de Paul)

What do you think when you see a homeless person sleeping in a cardboard box, or a beggar walking down the street? Are you turned off by her or his appearance, or are you able to see the reality of one of God’s treasured creations who is suffering and in need of help? As Saint Vincent de Paul reminds us, when we encounter the poor, it is an opportunity for us to experience Christ on earth. Think of the lines of people that would form to help the poor if everybody saw them as Christ on earth.

Loving God, open my heart so that I may see Christ in the face of the poor and needy.

Visit the Saint Vincent de Paul Society Web site to learn more about ministering to the poor.

“Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.”

(James 5:4)

In his letter, Saint James is giving a warning to those who are disregarding the rights of workers. Although the workers are looked down upon by the landowners, God affirms their worth by hearing their pleas for justice. Unfortunately this story is played out every day in the United States. Countless immigrant workers are routinely paid less than minimum wage. Businesses, like lawn services, claim that this is done in an effort to keep the costs down for us, the consumers. If we are to listen to Saint James, then we are called to avoid using businesses who engage in such practices.

Lord, help me fight injustice, especially injustices done in my name as a consumer.

What rights would I be willing to give up so that someone else could get a deal on a product?

“Everyone must consider his every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all His life and the means necessary to living it with dignity.”

(The Church in the Modern World)

It seems that most rules have an exception, like “i before e except after c,” but not the call to see every person as our neighbor. That rule is fundamental to our call to solidarity with all people. A world of peace and unity cannot happen if there are exceptions, like the people in Darfur who are ravaged by violence. This rule requires that we see as our neighbor not only those whom we come in contact with directly, but also those all the way across the globe, whom we may never meet.

God of peace, help me see every human being as my neighbor, and open my heart so that I am working toward peace for all people everywhere.

Go online and learn more about the grave human rights issues taking place in Darfur.

“Listen to the sermon preached to you by the flowers, the trees, the shrubs, the sky, and the whole world. Notice how they preach to you a sermon full of love, of praise of God, and how they invite you to glorify the sublimity of that sovereign Artist who has given them being.”

(Saint Paul of the Cross)

We often think of art as something we hang on a wall or see in a museum. But have you ever seen a beautiful sunset or looked down at a valley from a mountaintop? It can be breathtaking. As Saint Paul reminds us, God is an artist who uses all of creation as his canvas. Like most art, it requires that we, the observers, take time to appreciate it. If we focus too much on rushing through our day, we may miss the artistic masterpiece God has set before us.

God of creation, the work of your hands surpasses even the finest art in any museum. Help me slow down to admire your work.

Take a walk out in nature and listen to its sermon.

“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God’s sight. But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

(Luke 12:6–7)

Have you ever tried to count the hairs on someone’s head? It is nearly impossible, yet God has made the effort to know us down to the very last detail. Why? Because of the infinite love he has for each one of us. This infinite love is the source of the dignity and worth of every individual. As people so loved by our Creator, it only makes sense that we treat one another with the same love by acknowledging the dignity and worth of one another.

God the Creator, strengthen my love for others so that I too may show respect for their dignity and value.

Go out of your way today to let four people know they are loved and valued.

“Families should grow in awareness of being ‘protagonists’ of what is known as ‘family politics’ and assume responsibility for transforming society.”

(Pope John Paul II, *On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*)

We cannot simply be passive in the face of social challenges to the rights of the family. We are called to stand up as a family for all families. This does not happen overnight; it comes from a growing awareness. An important step in that process is to inform ourselves about the issues in our society that diminish the sanctity of marriage and that threaten the rights and dignity of the family. Once we are informed, we are called to act to make a change.

God, strengthen my family's awareness of our role to promote a society that supports the rights of all families.

Visit the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Web site and learn more about the bishops' efforts to promote a positive view of marriage with the *National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage*.

“When we do the best that we can, we never know what miracle is wrought in our life, or in the life of another.”

(Helen Keller)

Do not underestimate yourself. The life of Helen Keller is a testament to the power of one individual to do her best to overcome enormous obstacles. Helen became deaf and blind at age two, but by the time she was twenty, she became the first deaf and blind person to enroll in college. We all have obstacles in our lives, yet with God's grace, we have the ability to overcome these obstacles and make the world a better place for ourselves and others. What are some obstacles you face? How might you overcome them and make life better for you and others around you?

God Almighty, help me do my best to overcome the obstacles that exist in my life.

Go online and learn more about the life of Helen Keller and how doing one's best can be an inspiration for so many others.

**“Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees,
who write oppressive statutes, to turn
aside the needy from justice and to rob
the poor of my people of their right, that
widows may be your spoil, and that you
may make the orphans your prey!”**

(Isaiah 10:1–2)

Wow! Pretty harsh words for lawmakers, yet the tone helps enforce what the prophet is saying. It gives us a sense of how despicable it is for a person in power to bully the most vulnerable of people when it is the responsibility of the powerful to protect them. This message extends beyond government officials. It can be applied to anyone in a position of power, including you. How do you use your power and influence over friends to stand up for the student at school who is always picked on?

God Almighty, guide me to use the power you have given me to protect the most vulnerable.

Stand up for a vulnerable person at school today.

“Young people should be taught to act upon their own initiative, to accept the responsibility of facing with adequate competencies the risks connected with a fluid economic context that is often unpredictable in the way it evolves.”

*(Compendium of the Social Doctrine
of the Church)*

Young people can do amazing things. Take two friends, Stephen Wozniak and Steve Jobs, who liked technology. When they were not much older than you, they started their own business in building computers Steve's garage. Their passion and initiative began what is now known as Apple Incorporated. Their work is credited for helping launch the technology revolution that has changed all of our lives. Imagine if each of us combined our passion and initiative in the work that we do.

Lord, give me the initiative to follow my passion and change the world.

Make a list of things you are passionate about and then brainstorm ways you can use that passion to affect the world.

“A knowledge of the Globe and its various inhabitants, however slight . . . has a kindred effect with that of seeing them as travelers, which never fails, in uncorrupted minds, to weaken local prejudices, and enlarge the sphere of benevolent feelings.”

(James Madison)

Have you ever been afraid to try something because you thought you would not like it, and after trying it you liked it? The fear of the unknown can easily lead to prejudices. People in faraway countries who speak and dress differently from you may seem strange or even frightening, but they may think the same about you. Getting to know about other people and cultures helps us to overcome those fears and prejudices and leads us one step closer to living in peace and solidarity with them.

God, you made the world so wonderfully different. Help me see the beauty in all people and cultures.

Ask a friend whose family is from a foreign country to share some of his or her family customs with you.

“So Solomon’s builders and Hiram’s builders and the Gebalites did the stonecutting and prepared the timber and the stone to build the house.”

(1 Kings 5:18)

The house they were building was God’s house, the Temple. Notice how the materials of wood and stone come from the earth. It is not surprising that the materials used in honoring God came from God’s own creation. Next time you are sitting in church or walking down the street, look around and notice how it is all made from materials God has provided. Part of caring for God’s creation begins by simply being aware of how very important it is to our daily life.

God, your creation surrounds me. I give you thanks for its beauty.

Spend some time looking around your home today and thank God for the many different parts of creation that make up your home.

“*Gloria Dei vivens homo*’: the human person who fully lives his or her dignity gives glory to God, who has given this dignity to men and women.”

(Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church)

Think about the choices you make for yourself. How often do you chose to do something even though you know it is not what is best for you, or think that it is okay because it would only be hurting yourself? The Church reminds us that our choices go beyond ourselves. As the quote above notes, we glorify God by living a life that respects God’s gift of our own personal dignity. The choices we make both physically and spiritually reflect how we respect that gift. So next time you have to make a choice for yourself, ask how your decision may be a way to glorify God.

Lord, help me make choices that build me up both physically and spiritually to better glorify you.

Make a choice today to do two things—one to improve yourself physically and one to improve yourself spiritually.

“I would like to be known as a person who is concerned about freedom and equality and justice and prosperity for all people.”

(Rosa Parks)

One simple act—refusing to give up her seat on a bus—helped propel the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Rosa Parks refused to allow her human dignity or that of others to continue to be denigrated through segregation based on the color of their skin. Her one simple act set her place in history as one who is known for freedom and justice. Imagine if all of us took the opportunities God gives us to make “one simple act.” Where in your life is God calling you to take a stand (or stay in your seat)?

Loving God, give us the wisdom to seize the opportunities you offer us to take a stand and make a difference.

When you see or ride a bus today, remember Rosa Parks’s simple act, and then keep your eyes and heart open for where God is calling you to act today.

“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.”

(Matthew 18:15)

It can be painful when someone close to us has shown a disregard for our human dignity by sinning against us in some way. It is common to want to lash out at this person or tell others about what a “bad person” she or he is, yet Jesus calls us to handle it differently. As the passage from Matthew mentions, we have the responsibility to go to that person in private to discuss the situation in the sincere hope of finding reconciliation. It does take more humility and courage to lovingly confront the person, but ultimately it is our responsibility to do so.

Jesus, plant your words in my heart so that I may always seek reconciliation.

Has anyone ever confronted you about a sin you committed? Is the situation resolved?

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need, but not every man’s greed.”

(Mahatma Gandhi)

When the price of gas goes up, some people are inconvenienced because they can no longer afford their planned vacation. For other people, when the price of gas goes up they must sell their car, or walk because bus routes are eliminated. As our water sources continue to become increasingly toxic, some will spend extra money on bottled water, while others will drink water that is polluted with bacteria, waste, and chemicals. We must realize that not everyone on earth will experience the same events in the same way.

Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Take a drive through the poorest and wealthiest sections of your city or town. Think about the similarities and differences between these two areas.

“God has imprinted his own image and likeness on man . . . conferring upon him an incomparable dignity. . . . In effect, beyond the rights which man acquires by his own work, there exist rights which do not correspond to any work he performs, but which flow from his essential dignity as a person.”

(John Paul II, *The Hundredth Year*)

Work is an amazing gift to human life. Recall the feeling of satisfaction that comes from completing a painting, learning a piece of music, writing an English paper, or cleaning your room. Work can heal and nourish us. And yet we are always more than our work. Sweatshops and forced immigration are examples of how people are exploited for the sake of work. We must constantly work to promote fairness and justice in the workplace.

Thank you, loving Creator, for all people. May you bless those who work to make my life better.

Today be kind to those who work in the service industry. Smile, acknowledge them, and thank them for their service.

“Government leaders, your task is to draw your communities into closer ties of solidarity with all men, and to convince them that they must accept the necessary taxes on their luxuries and their wasteful expenditures in order to promote the development of nations and the preservation of peace.”

(Pope Paul VI, *On the Development of Peoples*)

The U.S. bishops speak out with force and clarity about the role of government officials and elected leaders. It is their job to create a world where all people can stand together in solidarity. As citizens, it is our job to hold them accountable to that task.

Engage me, God. I pray for the strength to speak the truth to our government leaders and to hold them accountable to all.

Write a letter to your state representative and quote the bishop's words. Encourage your political leaders to tax luxury items so that those in need may get what they deserve.

**“Teach us love, compassion and honor,
that we may heal the earth and heal each
other.”**

(Ojibwa Prayer for Healing)

We sometimes divide our attention between concern for the planet and concern for the people. Yet the two are interconnected. It is not possible to have healthy people without a healthy planet. Love, compassion, and honor compel us to care for one another and lead us to a healing relationship with our planet. When we attend to the weak and vulnerable, we will heal not only one another but also our planet.

I need the earth. The earth needs me. Help me to joyfully receive the earth's blessings.

Take a walk through your neighborhood and become aware of the places and people that are most in need of your love and compassion.

“In every deliberation we must consider the impact on the seventh generation . . . even if it requires having skin as thick as the bark of a pine.”

(Great Law of the Iroquois)

This law instructs each of us to consider the effects of our decisions on those who will live seven generations in the future. How would your life change if you lived this way? How would the world change if everyone lived with this consciousness? Can you live in such a way that your children and your children's children will be free of worry about the environment? The choices we make every day reflect our care and concern for the earth and all its inhabitants, current and future.

God of my great-great-great-grandmother, help me create a world of peace for my great-great-great grandchild.

Write a letter to your great-great-great-grandchild and explain to that child what you are doing to make his or her world a healthy, safe, and beautiful place.

“The Church’s teaching on international justice and peace is not simply a mandate for a few large agencies, but a challenge for every believer and every Catholic community of faith.”

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Called to Global Solidarity)

It can be tempting to think that because of our age we are incapable of changing corporations, communities, states, nations, and cultures. History provides us with many examples of people who have been instrumental in bringing about change. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts volunteer their services and raise money to help their local communities. Many young people participate in mission trips to help communities suffering from the effects of poverty. These acts inspire us to bring justice and peace to the world.

O God, I pray for the faith of a mustard seed, because with you, I can change the world. With you, I can change the world.

Search for *Invisible Children* on the Internet to learn about a modern example of three teenagers who, because of their compassion, have changed the world.

“What we would like to do is change the world. . . .”

(Dorothy Day)

Make no mistake about it, our God cries out for us to change the world. We can do this by comforting a friend, by assisting a stranger in need, or by challenging unethical corporations. Christian living calls us to love deeply, and sometimes our most loving act is to help another person to change. Do you accept the world as it is today as the only way of existing? Jesus challenged us to live in a way that would help bring about the Kingdom of God. Through love, kindness, and personal responsibility, we can change the world.

Creator God, help me change the world through love, kindness, and personal responsibility.

Read about God's vision of a changed world in Isaiah 2:2–5.

“[Jesus] said to him the third time, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.’”

(John 21:17)

If someone were to ask you how you show your love for God, what would you say? In this passage from John's Gospel, Jesus makes the connection between our love for God and service to God's people. By asking Peter the same question three times in a row, Jesus drives home the point that true love of God is demonstrated by loving one another.

Lord, you know that I love you. I pray that I may be loving to others.

Today in the cafeteria, offer to buy someone's lunch. Make sure the person doesn't pay you back.

“Workers also have a right to organize to protect their rights, to have a voice in the workplace and to be represented by trade unions.”

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
“A Labor Day Reflection on Immigration and Work”)

Labor unions represent the interests of workers and the working class. Labor unions campaign on behalf of workers for better treatment from employers, and they lobby government officials for laws protecting the legal rights of working people. The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) is the largest federation of unions in the United States, and it represents more than ten million workers. For immigrant workers, membership in a labor union is one way to prevent violation of their rights as workers.

Compassionate God, I pray for all those who work in unsafe conditions and for all those who are not compensated with a just wage.

Go online to learn more about the labor unions in the United States. Search for AFL-CIO or for the United Auto Workers (UAW).

“Man did not weave the web of life—he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.”

(Chief Seattle)

Who made the shirt you are wearing? Who drove the truck to deliver the supplies to the individual who made the shirt? Who grew the crops and prepared the lunch that fed the truck driver? Where does the farmer live that grew the crops? Where did the water come from that nourished the farmer's crops? Did it come from a river or stream close to you? Chief Seattle, a Native American leader for the Suquamish tribe in the Pacific Northwest, believed that just like a spider's web, we are all connected.

Creator, help me walk gently on life's web, for I do not know the effects of my actions.

Consider all the people who helped provide the shirt that is on your back. Look at the shirt's label to find out where some of those people live.

“What’s the use of a fine house if you haven’t got a tolerable planet to put it on?”

(Henry David Thoreau)

Does your family spend more time fixing up your house or fixing up the earth? The irony is that many of the things used to make a fine house end up destroying the earth: soaps and cleansers contain chemicals toxic to waterways; vacuums use electricity created by the destruction of mountains; lawn mowers use gasoline and pump harmful fumes into the air. Is it possible to have a clean house and a clean planet? Yes, but it will require effort. The first step is making our planet a top priority . . . a priority more important than a fine house.

God, help me remember that the earth is my house. My house is the earth.

Encourage your family to buy cleaning products that have been created with the earth in mind.

“Seeing the sun, the moon, the stars, I said to myself: Who could be the Master of these beautiful things?”

(Saint Josephine Bakhita)

Born in a Sudanese village, Sister Bakhita was kidnapped at age nine and taken to Italy as a slave. There she heard the Gospel’s liberating call, so she told her master that she would no longer be someone’s property. Slavery was illegal in Italy, and her appeal to her master and the courts aided Bakhita in her quest for freedom. Once free, she joined the Canossian order and began living a holy life through service to others. Her reputation for holiness spread, and she was canonized in 2000. We are sometimes imprisoned by the negative forces of greed, pride, and envy that are at work in the world. When we allow these shackles to fall away, we can serve the one God worth serving.

Liberating God, loosen the bindings from my hands and my heart. Help me serve only you.

Contemplate a force that imprisons you and make a choice that frees you from it this week.

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

(Anne Frank)

One of life's greatest secrets may be that we never have to wait to change. Though it may take some time to see the results of our efforts, we can die and resurrect into a new way of being. Many people describe “aha!” moments in their lives when they experienced clarity of thought, they made a decision, and then they experienced change. The truth is that we can begin our campaign to change the world at this very moment.

Guide my steps, Jesus, onto a path that brings about change in the world.

Write down one thing about yourself that you would like to change. Take one small step toward that change today.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

(Matthew 5:8)

Simplicity is about much more than how much stuff you have in your bedroom. Simple living is not only about stuff, it is about our thoughts and desires. Living a life that is simple in desire is difficult and requires commitment. We often see this singularity of thought in great athletes who have one constant goal: the championship. It is easy to admire such people and, in fact, we are called to be such people as we are told to “strive first for the kingdom of God and [God’s] righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

God, you are my hope. Free me from distractions and worry. Keep my eyes focused on your image and my ears intent on listening to your Word.

Allow yourself one simple and noble desire for today.

“Are you not a robber, you who consider your own that which has been given you solely to distribute to others? This bread which you have set aside is the bread of the hungry; this garment you have locked away is the clothing of the naked; those shoes which you let rot are the shoes of the one who is barefoot.”

(Saint Basil the Great)

As painful as this may sound, the sad truth is that the earth produces enough food to feed our world population, and yet while some starve to death, others have hot dog-eating contests. The act of simplifying your life from clutter is not just important to you; it is important to the rest of the world that relies on you and your generosity.

Generous God, help me eat only what I need to nourish my body, wear the clothes I own rather than buy something new, and appreciate all I have.

Write the above prayer on three pieces of paper and place each prayer in a place where you have too much (a closet, the refrigerator, a drawer).

“I don’t want to flee, nor do I want to abandon the battle of these farmers who live without any protection in the forest. They have the sacrosanct right to aspire to a better life on land where they can live and work with dignity while respecting the environment.”

(Sr. Dorothy Stang)

One proof that our Catholic community continues to spread an authentic Gospel message is that people continue to offer themselves as martyrs in the service of the poor. In 2005, Sr. Dorothy Stang, a nun in her seventies, was murdered because she spoke out against ranchers in Brazil who sought to remove indigenous farmers from their land. Though her life ended, her death has become an inspiration to countless others, including her own brother, who left a life of comfortable retirement to join the cause in Brazil.

I pray for the martyrs of our Church. May I be inspired by their courage.

Tell your grandparents or an elderly friend about the life of Sr. Dorothy Stang. Ask them what dreams they continue to hold in their hearts.

“A parish reaching beyond its own members and beyond national boundaries is a truly ‘catholic’ parish.”

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
Called to Global Solidarity)

Can a parish that does not reach beyond its own members or national boundaries be called “catholic”? A Catholic parish that does not reach out to others is failing in the very thing it was created to do—to change the world. As members of Catholic parishes, we are called every day to be catholic—to reach outside of ourselves, our parishes, and our country to help those in need.

Living God, I pray for the ability to reach out to others and welcome them into my world.

Find out about a ministry in your parish that reaches out in solidarity to help people in another country. Volunteer your time to this ministry.

“In the end, our society will be defined not only by what we create, but by what we refuse to destroy.”

(John C. Sawhill)

John C. Sawhill served for ten years as president and CEO of the Nature Conservancy, an international organization dedicated to preserving the health of our earth. The Nature Conservancy works by purchasing fragile areas of land and then allowing the land to exist without development or improvement. Sawhill’s vision is a reminder that most things—our planet included—can take care of themselves if we allow them to be.

Creator God, you created the earth and all that is a part of it. Remind me today to step back so that you may continue to do your amazing work.

Read Psalm 19, “God’s Glory in Creation and the Law”

“[The word *belonging*] prompts us to consider how radically different two states of mind are: one in which we look out across a forest or valley and say to ourselves, ‘This is where I belong,’ and the other . . . in which we hear ourselves say, ‘This belongs to me.’”

(Carol Lee Flinders)

These two sentences are spoken from very different perspectives. The person who says, “This belongs to me” exerts a position of power and strength over something. The person who says, “This is where I belong” views himself or herself as part of something larger and more powerful than the self. This is an important lesson for us. Christ promised that the meek would inherit the earth.

*I belong to the earth and the sea, the wind and the rain.
I belong to this place and these people, and most of all
God, I belong to you.*

Spend some time outside in your backyard or at a local park. Think about which statement reflects your perspective: “This belongs to me” or “This is where I belong.”

“You cannot find peace by avoiding life.”

(Virginia Woolf)

The reality of life is that we can never have all that we want, and at times we may not have what we need. The wisest among us, though, realize that struggle is a part of life, and by accepting that truth, we can experience a sense of peace. The wisest among us are often those who experience suffering: the poor, the sick, and the immigrant. We would do well to spend time with them and learn about their struggles. It is easy to rely on electronic devices, vacations, and television shows to help us avoid life's difficulties. Instead we are called to open ourselves up to the challenges in our lives, as well as to the challenges others face.

I accept life's struggles. I embrace the world's conflicts. I open myself to the world's suffering. Here I am, Lord.

Find today's newspaper and read an article about a current problem in our world. Think about how you can help.

“Becoming disgusted with how you worry about the past and how you are pre-occupied with the future is good—it convinces you to let go and enjoy ‘the now.’”

(Robert J. Wiks)

Simple living requires us to simplify everything in our lives. Scaling back on our possessions is only the beginning; we must be mindful of our activities, desires, thoughts, and even our place in time. Just as we cannot be in several places at one time, we cannot focus on the present moment if we are thinking about the past or concentrating on the future. The truth is, all we really have is the present moment. Though we learn from the past, we need not identify ourselves by it, and though we have hope for the future, we need not dwell on it. Embrace the moment that you have right now.

Right now, I am here. Right now, I am here. Right now, I am here.

Put your watch in a drawer and turn off the clock on your cell phone. Be present in the moment and avoid asking, “What’s happening next?” for twenty-four hours.

“Everybody would be rich if nobody tried to become richer. And nobody would be poor if everybody tried to be the poorest.”

(Peter Maurin)

This ideal would turn the world upside down if we could ever experience it on earth. Illogically the most certain way to create a world where everyone has enough is for all of us to race to the bottom. By making poverty our prize, and by creating a world where the weakest are empowered, we can create a new world.

Servant God, I pray for hands that seek service, a heart that seeks humility, and a life that seeks to be the lowest of the low.

At dinner tonight, suggest that no one serve herself or himself; everyone must rely on someone else to prepare her or his plate and pour her or his drink . . . a dinner of total service.

“We must ensure that the global market is embedded in broadly shared values and practices that reflect global social needs, and that all the world’s people share the benefits of globalization.”

(Kofi Annan, Ghanaian diplomat, seventh secretary-general of the United Nations)

For the people living in Guatemala, globalization often means being forced off your land. For the people living in Bangladesh, it often means working in a factory making shoes for nine cents an hour. For the people living in Nigeria, it often means a foreign country importing your oil and profits. Globalization as defined by the rich is not necessarily good for the rest of the world.

Lord, I pray for a just world.

Go online and watch the twenty-minute video *The Story of Stuff* to learn about the connection between environmental and social issues, and what we can do to create a more sustainable and just world.

“Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ He said, ‘I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?’”

(Genesis 4:9)

In this story, Cain poses a question to God that we continue to ask today: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Modern versions sound like this: Am I my homeless brother’s keeper? Am I my Kenyan sister’s keeper? Am I responsible for the health of undocumented immigrants? The answer to all these questions is YES! We are bound to one another as children of God. We truly belong to one another and are called to care for one another.

God our Father, help me care for my homeless brother and my Kenyan sister. Help me respond to the needs of those around me.

Do an act of kindness for one of your siblings or classmates.

“True stewardship requires changes in human actions—both in moral behavior and technical advancement.”

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,
“Global Climate Change”)

If a hockey team keeps losing games, something needs to change—perhaps the starting lineup, the way practices are conducted, or even the team’s attitude. One certainty is that if things don’t change, the team will continue to lose. Similarly, our planet’s health continues to worsen, and if we don’t change how we live, how can we expect the world to heal? It is often the most technologically advanced countries that do the most harm to the planet. Only when we change the way we use technology and change our behavior in relationship to the earth can we hope for healing.

Lord, help me be a caretaker of the world. Let me be the nourishing soil from which a healthier world grows.

Reduce your dependence on plastic, electricity, and processed food by avoiding the microwave. Today eat fresh fruits or vegetables for a snack.

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

(Matthew 6:21)

A person who preaches about human rights and then spends his or her money on products made in sweatshops is seen as a hypocrite. A friend who speaks little about poverty but regularly volunteers his or her time in a soup kitchen is seen as an advocate of the poor. Perhaps the best way to uncover our heart's deepest yearnings is to cross-check them with our bank statements. We spend our money on the things that we truly care the most about. Amazingly, we will redirect our heart's desire when we redirect our funds.

Give me the courage, O God, to share my treasure with the most vulnerable people in the world. Help me spend the money you've entrusted to me in a way that reflects the true desire of my heart.

Itemize your spending this week. Make note of the top two categories in which you spend your money. Does your spending reflect the true desire of your heart?

“I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me lie down in safety.”

(Psalm 4:8)

The Psalmist prays with an imagination about what will be. Can we imagine the president of the United States hosting a meal for undocumented immigrants in the White House? Can we imagine people sitting on their front porch and talking to neighbors while using the no-longer-desired Xbox as a footrest? Can we imagine Kenyans shipping food to Kansas because the people there suffer from drought? Can we imagine emptied prisons being used as giant jungle gyms for kids? Can we imagine a homeless and wandering carpenter's son changing the world by his suffering, death, and Resurrection?

Open my mind, imaginative Creator. Help me follow your example.

Come up with three questions like the ones above. Imagine peace and justice being lived in your neighborhood.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal.”

(Matthew 6:19)

A benefit to living a simple life is that we don't have to worry about protecting, caring for, or maintaining our numerous possessions. A person who lives without a car can forget not only about the car but also about alarm systems, insurance payments, garage doors, interstate traffic, and tire rotations. The more money we spend on acquiring things, the more money we need to spend on maintaining those purchases. But golden handcuffs—though made of gold—are still handcuffs, and the desire to possess them will shackle us. This can easily distract us from our primary task as humans: to love one another. Keeping our treasure simple helps keep our life's focus simple.

*Liberating God, free my heart from the desire to possess.
Create in me a desire for simplicity.*

Today, give away one possession. Set yourself free.

“Jesus looked at him and said, ‘How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom of God!’”

(Luke 18:24)

Upon reading some of Jesus’s words, it can be tempting to ask, “He couldn’t possibly mean what he actually said, could he?” But the truth is that the act of holding on to stuff that other people need is the equivalent of not loving. It is hard to truly love others if we are not sharing our bounty with those most in need. Rest assured, someone needs your help now. The “good news” is that we can begin living a life of generosity and simplicity now; the Kingdom of God is at hand.

Lord, help me be generous with my gifts.

Dedicate yourself to tithing 10 percent of your next paycheck or allowance to a worthy organization.

“The apex of biblical teaching on work is the commandment of the Sabbath rest.”

*(Compendium of the Social Doctrine
of the Church)*

Fifty years ago, you would have had a difficult time finding a store open on Sunday. Workers were expected to be home relaxing with their family and friends or attending church services. Now on Sundays the stores are packed with shoppers all day, and workers are expected to be there. What happened to God's command to rest on Sunday? When we let work overtake Sunday, we restrict and even eliminate our ability and others' to worship God and be renewed both spiritually and physically. To reclaim Sunday rest, we as shoppers need to forego shopping on Sunday. If there are no shoppers, then there will not be a need for workers.

Lord, help us reclaim the gift of rest on Sunday so that we may worship you and be renewed.

This Sunday avoid doing work or causing others to do work as a result of your going shopping.

“When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?”

(Eleanor Roosevelt)

It is our conscience, our inner voice that God gave us, which summons us toward justice. As Eleanor Roosevelt points out, by listening carefully to our conscience, we become proactive in working toward peace. When we as a society are passive in the face of impending human misery, we often respond too late and with misguided efforts to avenge the wrong that has been done. What are ways you can be proactive in preventing the suffering of others in your family or community?

Gracious God, you call us to be proactive in helping our brothers and sisters. Help me listen tenderly to my conscience and follow its biddings.

Be proactive today. Seek out a way to prevent the suffering of another in your family or community.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’”

(Genesis 1:26)

How do you define the word *dominion*? Do you think of it as responsibility for something or as dominating something? God did give humankind power over creation, but it was so that we could care for it and be good stewards. Unfortunately, too often people think in terms of dominating creation. Consider how some animals are mistreated or abandoned by their owners. We must use our power in an effort to care for creation.

Almighty Creator, you gave us dominion over the animals; help us to use that power wisely and lovingly.

Consider donating to your local animal shelter today.

“For God, the Lord of life, has conferred on men the surpassing ministry of safeguarding life in a manner which is worthy of man. Therefore from the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes.”

(The Church in the Modern World)

When talking about abortion and infanticide, the Church uses the word *unspeakable*, meaning horrific, appalling, or revolting. Why such strong language? Think about the victim, an absolutely defenseless human being. When we think about defending the life and dignity of a human person, the more vulnerable the person is, the greater our responsibility to work to protect him or her.

Lord of life, bless the unborn and transform the hearts of those who would harm them.

Read Exodus 2:1–10 and reflect on the efforts of Moses’s mom to keep her infant child safe. Think about how different our faith would be if Moses had not been protected.

“It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and Bible.”

(George Washington)

During a time when some individuals are working to remove God from all public discourse, the quote from our first president makes quite a statement. The need for God and his call for justice and love are vital to a successful society. As followers of Christ, we are called to take an active role in the political discourse by encouraging laws and policies that promote justice and respect for the dignity of all people. Do you know someone whose faith in God guides her or him in active participation in political discourse?

Lord, help me find my voice in the political system so that I may actively promote laws and policies that are pleasing to you.

Search for “faithful citizenship” on the Web to learn how to make your voice heard by our political leaders.

“Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”

(Exodus 20:12)

Imagine what would happen if every automobile driver decided not to follow the rules of the road. There would be chaos. The same is true for the rules of life God gave us in the Ten Commandments. This is especially true for the fourth commandment, which tells us of our responsibility to honor our mom and dad. When we choose not to obey our parents, we not only break God’s law, but we also fail to respect the authority God has given them. Fundamental to each person’s growth toward promoting justice is having the humility to live according to God’s law within our own family.

Thank you, God, for my parents; help me humbly accept their authority.

Make an extra effort to honor and obey your parents today.

“The elderly constitute an important school of life, capable of transmitting values and traditions, and of fostering the growth of younger generations, who thus learn to seek not only their own good but also that of others.”

*(Compendium of the Social Doctrine
of the Church)*

Do you or a friend live with an elderly relative? Most elderly people are willing to share their experiences but are seldom asked. Imagine how you would feel having a wealth of experience and wisdom and nobody cared. As students of the “school of life,” we are called to take the time and sometimes patience needed to learn from the elderly. The values and traditions they have to offer are priceless, and this great opportunity to learn from them will not last forever.

Lord, give me the patience and understanding to recognize the needs of the elderly to share their wisdom and my need to learn from them.

Next time you are with elderly relatives, stop and ask them to tell you about their greatest hardship in life.

“Our Lord has created persons for all states in life, and in all of them we see people who achieved sanctity by fulfilling their obligations well.”

(Saint Anthony Mary Claret)

When you think of people who are holy, what type of job do you imagine them doing? Do you think of garbage collecting or driving the city bus? Saint Anthony Mary Claret reminds us that we can achieve holiness through whatever work God is calling us to do by fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted to us. There is no age limit on our ability to achieve holiness through our work. What type of work do you do? How can you fulfill those obligations well?

All-holy God, make me holy in your sight. Please bless my efforts at the work you have entrusted me to do.

Take extra care today to fulfill your obligations.

“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”

(Matthew 7:12)

Jesus’s teaching, known as the Golden Rule, causes us to stretch, to think beyond ourselves. The individualist emphasis that often permeates our society runs directly counter to this teaching. If we are called to be as one family in solidarity, then thinking beyond ourselves is essential to that call. By seeing the hungry or homeless and imagining we were them, our efforts toward solidarity begin.

Loving God, help me do unto others as I would have them do unto me.

Write down the Golden Rule and tape it to your mirror as a reminder to work toward solidarity.

“God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity.”

*(Compendium of the Social Doctrine
of the Church)*

Since we were small children, our parents have been teaching us to play fair and share our things. Why then is it so hard to do? As part of humankind’s responsibility to care for the earth, we are called to share its goods fairly. Yet just like the favorite toy on the playground, society struggles to share the resources the earth has to provide. In Haiti, for example, people are struggling to have just the basic necessities, while other countries are steeped in surplus. God expects us to play fair and to share on the playground and around the world.

Lord, help me apply what I know about sharing with my desire to live justly.

Go to the Catholic Relief Services Web site and find ways you can share with the people of Haiti.

“Life is the first good received from God and is fundamental to all others; to guarantee the right to life for all and in an equal manner for all is the duty upon which the future of humanity depends.”

(Pope Benedict XVI)

Did you know that about seventeen thousand murders are committed in the United States each year? That is enough people to nearly fill a professional basketball stadium! Pope Benedict reminds us of the need to protect life equally, meaning we all have the right to live in a safe environment. One group of people that works toward protecting life and providing a safe environment is the law enforcement community. We are all called to work with them in protecting this fundamental right for ourselves and our neighbors.

Loving God, please continue to bless the work of the law enforcement community so that every person may simply have the right to live.

If you encounter someone in the law enforcement community today, thank the person for his or her efforts.

“Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done, because they did not repent.”

(Matthew 11:20)

Jesus spent time showing people the right and just way to live, yet many refused to change their ways. So Jesus reproached them because they knew the right thing to do and chose not to do it. As followers of Jesus, we too are called to learn about our faith and the world around us. Once we do, we can no longer turn a blind eye to injustice.

*Lord Jesus, you never turned a blind eye to injustice.
Grant me the grace today to follow your example.*

Go to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Web site and study one of the social justice topics. The site often suggests ways you can help make a difference, so choose one to begin working on today.