

From the Desk of Fr. Jerry

September 15, 2024

Dear Friends,

St. Patrick is blessed to have a wide variety of catechetical programs. Today is Catechetical Sunday. We owe a debt of gratitude to all those who put their faith into action implementing these programs.

In a message written for the observance of Catechetical Sunday*, the author spoke about “two feet of love in action.” He credits Pope Benedict as the source of the “two feet” image. The Pope’s third encyclical spoke of a two-pronged approach to love of God and neighbor: “service of charity towards neighbor” and “work for a more just and fraternal world”.

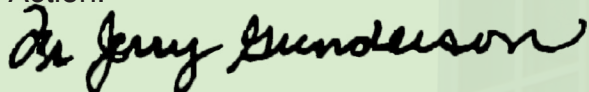
“Putting Two Feet of Love in Action” describes two distinct, but complementary ways we can seek to address issues like hunger and poverty. One “foot” is known as service or charity. When we walk with this foot, we seek to address immediate or basic needs, or to provide emergency assistance to help those in need. Charitable Works are our response to immediate needs and specific situations: “feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick, visiting those in prison” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 31).

Examples of charitable works includes donating to food pantries, serving at soup kitchens, assisting with disaster relief, welcoming newcomers, ministering to people who are elderly, incarcerated, or disabled, and providing spiritual support or counseling for those who are struggling. Catholic Charities, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and Catholic Relief Services are the charitable activities of the wider church.

The other “foot” of love of God and neighbor is social justice. We “step” with social justice when we strive to understand the underlying or “root” causes of the issues that affect many people, and then work to change systems or structures to address them. We ask questions such as: Why are there so many people who experience poverty and food insecurity? What factors prevent people from having access to what they need to thrive? How do certain policies or structures help or worsen the situation? Who benefits from the way things are? Whose voices are missing around the table?

Stepping with the “foot” of social justice means educating yourself and others about poverty’s “root” causes and about issues that impact vulnerable people around the world. It is also advocating for policies that help individuals and families to overcome poverty and hunger. The Illinois Catholic Conference offers opportunities for legislative advocacy. Even participating in neighborhood associations, parish ministries, school boards can all be forms of stepping with social justice. Local opportunities are countless!

Catechetical Programs should enable each of us and all of us to walk with both “feet” of Love in Action.



Fr. Jerry Gunderson

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