Social Justice Sunday Liturgy Notes

*September 25, 2016 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time*

# Social Justice Statement 2016–2017

***A Place at the Table:***

***Social justice in an ageing society***

**Overview**:

The number of Australians aged 65 and over will more than double by the middle of the century. This has been rightly described as ‘the great success story of human development’. Increasing numbers of older people will enjoy good health and an active life for many years.

The Australian Catholic Bishops’ Social Justice Statement for 2016–17 is titled ‘*A Place at the Table: Social justice in an ageing society’.* It celebrates the value, dignity and significant contributions of older people to the life of the community. In solidarity with all generations, older people have a rightful place in the heart of community life.

In the Statement, the Bishops confront the utilitarianism in our society that values people only for what they produce and contribute economically and that, at worst, can regard older people as burdensome or dispensable.

In a society in which older people are being asked to work beyond the traditional retirement age, the bishops call for the benefits of work to be shared equitably. We must be especially aware of the needs of those who enter retirement in poverty or are particularly vulnerable to economic hardship, social isolation or exploitation.

The Bishops consider the circumstances of those who are approaching the end of their lives and warn of the loneliness, ageism and abuse that older people can experience. In particular, the Bishops warn about implications of the current community debate on euthanasia.

The Bishops call for communities of mercy and love – where people reach out and minister to vulnerable older people, where bonds between generations are built up, and where no one is cast as being a burden or as rivals to younger generations

#### For the Parish Bulletin

We celebrate Social Justice Sunday on 25 September. This year, the Australian Bishops’ Social Justice Statement is titled: ‘*A Place at the Table: Social justice in an ageing society’*.

The Statement celebrates the value and dignity of older people in Australian life. It challenges us to recognise their significant contribution to society and emphasises that this contribution should not be valued in mere economic terms. The Statement calls for justice for those who are most vulnerable and warns about a view of older people as burdensome or dispensable.

For further details about the Social Justice Statement, visit the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website [www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au) or call (02) 8306 3499.

# Liturgy Notes

The following notes may be of use to link the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time with Social Justice Sunday, 25th September, 2016.

**Welcome**

Today is Social Justice Sunday. The Australian Catholic Bishops have published a Social Justice Statement, titled: ***A Place at the table: Social justice in an ageing society.***

The Statement celebrates the value and dignity of older people in Australian life. It challenges us to recognise their significant contribution to society and emphasises that this contribution should not be valued in mere economic terms. The Statement calls for justice for those who are most vulnerable and warns about a view of older people as burdensome or dispensable.

# Readings

The Readings for the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C) relate strongly to the message of this year’s Social Justice Statement. Social Justice is about ensuring that all have a fair share of this world’s goods, and that all are treated with respect and dignity. It is about reading the signs of the time already before us – and taking action for justice as individuals, as communities and as a nation.

#### Amos 6:1. 4-7

The Lord says this: ‘*Woe to those ensconced so snugly in Zion.’* Amos is berating those ‘sprawling’ in their material comforts and ignoring the needs of the poor in the society.

#### Psalm 145:6-10

In contrast, the Psalm praises God who is **‘**just to those who are oppressed.**’**

#### I Timothy 6:11-16

St Paul exhorts the people to be faithful to their calling and to the commitment they made before many witnesses.

#### Gospel: Luke 16:19-13

Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to try to get the people to understand that they do not need any more signs – the message is clearly before them. Like the rich man, wecan spend our time waiting for the big signs and miss all the small ones - the obvious truths at our gate.

#### Reflection on the readings/Homily Notes

Today’s gospel includes the phrase “*scraps that fell from the rich man’s table*”. It is a phrase we are familiar with. It refers to those who are in need getting the scraps, whatever is left over after the rich have had what they consider is their share.

In the Gospel, Lazarus, waits at the rich man’s gate and longs for a share of whatever falls from the rich man’s table. Scripture scholars tell us the reference here is probably to the pita bread commonly used by diners at banquets to wipe their hands. The bread would be discarded after use and snapped up by the dogs. Lazarus has a reasonable hope that, even if the servants fail to offer him the leftovers, the dogs might share their daily fare.

The poor man only waits for the scraps from the rich man’s table: it is unthinkable that he would ever expect to sit at the table.

Today the Bishop’s Social Justice Statement is made available in churches throughout Australia and is titled: *A Place at the Table: Social justice in an ageing society*.

It includes the following story told by Pope Francis during one of his morning meditations:

There was a father, mother and their many children, and a grandfather lived with them. He was quite old, and when he was at table eating soup, he would get everything dirty: his mouth, the serviette ... it was not a pretty sight! One day the father said that, given what was happening to the grandfather, from that day forward he would eat alone. And so he bought a little table, and placed it in the kitchen. And so the grandfather ate alone in the kitchen while the family ate in the dining room. After some days, the father returned home from work and found one of his children playing with wood. He asked him: ‘What are you doing?’ to which the child replied: ‘I am playing carpenter’. ‘And what are you building?’ the father asked. ‘A table for you papa, for when you get old like grandpa’.

Everyone has a place at the table.

The statement points out that the ageing of the population is ‘the great success story of human development’ In Australia 75% of men and 85% of women are reaching retirement age with around 20 years of life ahead of them. This means older Australians still have a lot to give and to enjoy in family, social engagement, employment and leisure.

There is a danger, however, that this new era of an extended lifespan will be seen only in economic terms with the emphasis on people working longer and not being a drain on the next generation.

Australia’s response to this new challenge must be to share costs and benefits of an ageing population fairly. For those who choose to keep working there must be flexible workplaces and just conditions. We need to avoid *ageism* which stereotypes older people as weak and dependent and a burden on society.

For those who are vulnerable in their later years there must be respect for their dignity as a person. This dignity is undermined when their wishes are overlooked, their decision-making power is restricted or their basic rights are infringed.

Older people who may be at a disadvantage in their later years include women who have limited retirement savings, those who do not own their own home, older unemployed people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who experience higher levels of poverty and reduced longevity.

We should be grateful for what we have received from previous generations and ensure that adequate resources are provided for their care.

As a Christian community we are all called to reach out to one another – the young to spend time with parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts; older people to share their rich life experience and wisdom with the young.

As Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen, Chairman of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, says in the Introduction to the Statement:

*At this time in Australia, we face a threefold challenge: to work for an inclusive society that brings older people into the heart of the community; to ensure the dignity and care of people who are frail and most vulnerable to neglect or abuse; and to foster solidarity among all generations, recognising the special affinity that exists between young and old.* [Social Justice Statement]

#### Prayers of the Faithful

**Celebrant:** We pray to the God of all people that our hearts be open to Jesus’ message of love and compassion for all people.

We pray for Pope Francis that his example of compassion for all people and concern for the elderly inspire us to act with gentleness and compassion.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

We pray for bishops, priests, religious and leaders in the Catholic community; that they inspire us to create a universal communion which excludes nothing and no one.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

We pray for the people of our nation; that we open our eyes, our minds and our hearts so that we may see that we are all on life’s journey and need each other’s respect and support, whatever stage of life we are at.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

We pray for the leaders of our nation; that they ensure that the benefits of a longer life extend to all and that the dignity of all people is respected.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

We pray for those who care for elderly people in aged care facilities and in their homes and neighbourhoods, that tier care is modelled on the love and compassion of Jesus.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

We pray for those who struggle with the diminishment of ageing. May they grow in patience and graciousness.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

We pray for those who have died, especially those who have died alone. May they rest in peace.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

**Celebrant:** May our prayers rise before you God of all people and nations. May your grace fill the world and bring forth the reign of justice and mercy. We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

**Amen.**

**Suggested Music**

All are Welcome (Marty Haugen)

Abide O Spirit of Life (D. Haas)

A New Heart for a New World (Watts/O'Brien)

Amazing Grace (Traditional)

Bread of life, Hope for the World (B. Farrell)

Bring Forth the Kingdom (M. Haugen)

Christ Be Our Light (D. Haas)

Christ Be Our Light (B. Farrell)

City of God (St Louis Jesuits)

Come to the Feast (M. Haugen)

Come As You are. (Deidre Brown)

Galilee Song (Frank Anderson)

Harvest of Justice (D. Haas)

Hosea [Come Back to Me] (Weston Priory)

No Right to Crush God’s People (Peter Kearney)

The Beatitudes (Peter Kearney)

The God of Second Chances (D. Haas)

The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor (St Louis Jesuits)

Voices That Challenge (D. Haas)

We Are Called (D. Haas)

***Suggestion:* The following prayer, issued with the Statement as a prayer card, could be given to parishioners or printed on the bulletin and said together.**

**A Prayer for all Ages**

God of all creation, you are timeless and beyond all ages.

*We who are growing old* give thanks for the years you have given us –

for family, friends and all those who have enriched our lives

*We who are not yet old* give thanks for the older people in our lives:

for grandparents, loved ones, friends

and all who generously offer the wise counsel of their years.

*We who are growing old* pray that we may be patient with our ageing limbs

and difficulties in everyday tasks we once did much more easily.

*We who are not yet old* pray for patience and kindness

towards those who do not move as quickly as we would sometimes like.

*We who are growing old* pray for good health in our later years,

and forbearance when our health fails us.

*We who are not yet old* pray for good health for those we love

and compassion towards those who suffer ill health.

*We who are growing old* pray for prudence and sweet timing,

in offering our wisdom to the next generation, while respecting their energy and creativity.

*We who are not yet old* pray for openness and humility in receiving

the advice and guidance of our elders.

*We who are growing old* pray that we may face our death with serenity and dignity.

*We who are not yet old* pray that we affirm the sacredness of each person’s life

and accompany those who are dying

with gentleness and deep respect.

God of endless love, help us to understand

that we share a common life journey,

a call to live life to the full

and to strive to enable all creation to come to the fullness of the Cosmic Christ. Amen

**For further details about the Catholic Bishops’ Statement, visit the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website** [**www.acsjc.org.au**](http://www.acsjc.org.au) **or call (02) 8306 3499**

**The ACSJC website also has resources available for download free of charge. They include a PowerPoint presentation and a Community Education resource suitable for parish groups and senior students.**