

SEE, JUDGE, ACT: DISCERNING OUR RESPONSE

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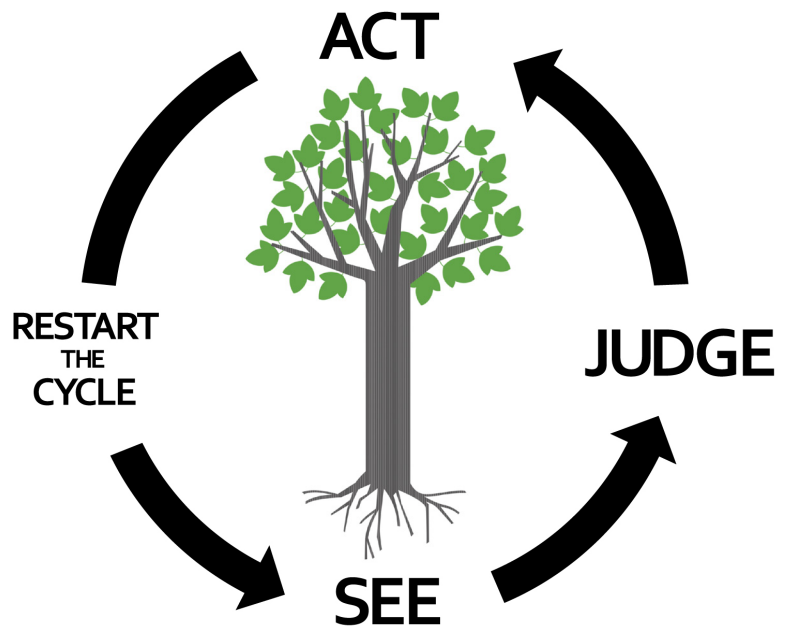
SLIDE 1: TITLE SLIDE //

SLIDE 2 //

How do we respond . . . ?

Give current examples for each and ask the participants to identify responses. As the discussion is to tap into prior learning, it can be brief.

- when natural disasters strike here in Canada or in other countries? (e.g. floods, earthquakes, typhoons, drought)
- in situations of global conflict or war? (e.g. Syria, Darfur)
- when a social crisis happens in our own community or country? (e.g. violence, religious intolerance)
- when faced with ongoing injustices here in Canada or around the world? (e.g. poverty, racism, the legacy of residential schools)



SLIDE 3 //

When an earthquake happens, famine strikes, or a violent conflict erupts in Canada or around the world, we naturally want to respond as quickly as possible. However sometimes the quickest way to help is not always the most effective solution. Despite the best of intentions, sometimes our individual and collective efforts to 'help' others in need can lead to unintended or even harmful consequences, especially when we do not understand the problem fully - its causes and context. We also know that bad things happen when good people do nothing. So, what can a person of good will do to help? A catholic approach starts with discernment.

Discernment: The process of listening for and recognizing God's call on how to respond for the greater good in the circumstances we face – either in our own lives or when we are working for justice. This process involves humbling ourselves, gathering information, praying and reflecting on current events in our lives, our communities and our world. When one arrives at a good decision, there will be peace.

Development and Peace uses the Tree of Catholic Social Teaching to represent the process of discernment and action on social injustices. The process of See-Judge-Act was first developed by Belgian Cardinal Joseph Cardijn and is cyclical, as we constantly need to assess the impact of our actions for justice.

The people affected by the injustice must remain central to the whole process: their knowledge, hopes, capabilities, work and power to transform their own situation. By keeping them central to the process, we uphold the Catholic Social Teaching Principles of Human Dignity and Subsidiarity and ensure the best possible outcome of our own actions.

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Stage 1 is to SEE: to recognize and examine key facts, conditions and the impacts of the injustice, as well as situate ourselves in relation to it.

Stage 2 is to JUDGE the situation through:

- a. social analysis, and
- b. the lens of our faith

Stage 3 is to ACT by planning and carrying out actions – in light of our Faith – and working to bring a bit of God’s Kingdom here ‘on Earth’ to transform the situation.

Stage 4 is to RESTART the CYCLE, returning to the SEE stage to examine the impact of our actions.

SLIDE 4: SEE //

The soil represents the environment in which injustice occurs. We must see, hear and experience “the lived realities of individuals and communities,” so that we can:

- a. learn as many facts as we can about the injustice, and
- b. situate ourselves in relation to it.

SLIDE 5 //

- a. We have to learn as many facts as we can about the social injustice we are examining and the people affected. As an entry point, we can ask these questions:

SLIDE 6 //

- b. To uncover the connections between ourselves and this issue, we can ask the following questions:

SLIDE 7: JUDGE //

The second stage is to JUDGE the situation, as at Confirmation we receive the gift of Right Judgement.

The trunk serves as the filtering site for the tree and here represents our examination of the injustice through

- a. social analysis, and
- b. reflection on the situation in light of the teachings of our faith, so that we can discern the right path to follow.

SLIDE 8 //

- a. Social Analysis helps give us a more complete picture of the situation, its causes, and the various factors that contribute to it. In this stage, we attempt to make sense of the reality we saw in step one and ultimately answer these questions:

SLIDES 9-15 //

To respond to these questions, we need to look deeper and critically analyse the injustice from historical, social, economic, political and ecological lenses. This requires research. We also need to examine the responses already taking place. We can ask the following questions through these lenses: (in the next 7 slides)

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SLIDE 16 //

- b. Taking into account all we have learned from social analysis, we judge the situation through the lens of our faith: scripture, the life and teaching of Jesus, and Catholic Social Teaching. This part of the JUDGE stage involves reflection and prayer. To begin, we can ask the following questions:

SLIDE 17 //

Next, we look to Catholic Social Teaching for guidance on this issue. Catholic Social Teaching helps us apply the teachings of Christ in our current contexts. People around the world are connected in ways we rarely see, including through our food, clothing, politics and the environment.

- These are the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Where do you think they come from? (See *Appendix I* for handout with CST definitions.)

SLIDE 18 //

Here are some of the places CST originates:

SLIDE 19 //

You can distribute the handout on CST at this point and give participants some time to read before asking the questions on the slide. If you have more time, you can engage them in a group activity. Divide them into smaller groups and have each group focus on a few different teachings, answer the following questions and report back to the larger group.

SLIDE 20: ACT //

The third step is to ACT by planning and carrying out actions to transform the situation based on the information gathered in the SEE stage and the analysis and reflection done in the JUDGE stage. Through this process, we gain insight into how God is calling us to respond.

Sometimes we need to return to an earlier stage to gather more facts, do some more analysis or prayerfully consider new information in the light of our faith before we act.

SLIDE 21 //

In acting to address situations of injustice, we show our love for God and neighbour. We must act in such a way that brings about a more just situation for everyone. Through just action to transform the situation, we reach out like the branches, and our actions bear fruit.

SLIDE 22 //

First, however, we must ask these questions:

With the first set of questions in mind, we can ask ourselves:

Our action should include both aspects of social justice: charity and justice.

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SLIDE 23 //

Acts of Charity meet immediate needs – such as food, water, shelter and clothing – and reflect the compassion of Christ.

Acts of Justice seek to resolve the root causes of the problem for the long term, so that charity is no longer needed. In this way, we work towards the inclusion of Gospel values in society and bear witness to Jesus' own heart for justice.

Both are equally important; *both* are crucial to any response!

SLIDE 24 //

To plan effectively for our actions, we can ask ourselves the following questions:

SLIDE 25 //

You can evaluate the proposed action plan against the principles of Catholic Social Teaching with these guiding questions:

SLIDE 26 //

We need to remind ourselves that this is a cyclical process: we examine the fruits of our labour and the impact of our actions by beginning the See-Judge-Act process again.

SLIDES 27-28 //

We can do this by asking these questions:

The fruit falls. It affects and improves the soil. The seeds from the fruit produce new roots. We cultivate justice.

SLIDE 29 //

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APPENDIX I //

DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON:

The foundation of all Catholic Social Teaching is the inherent dignity of the human person, as created in the image and likeness of God. The church, therefore, calls for Integral Human Development, which concerns the wellbeing of every person in all dimensions: economic, political, social, ecological, and spiritual.

COMMON GOOD:

We must consider the good of others, and the good of the whole human family, in organizing our society – economically, politically, legally. Human dignity can only be realized and protected through our relationship with society-at-large. We must love our neighbor – locally and globally – and prioritize the good of the human family over commercial interests.

SOLIDARITY:

We are all part of the human family and we are all interconnected and interdependent. Loving our neighbour has global dimensions. We must see ourselves in others and collaborate toward solutions. Solidarity is a recognition that we are 'all in this together,' and is a commitment to strengthen community and promote a just society.

PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR:

The moral test of any society is based on how the most vulnerable are treated. Just as God's love is universal, this principle does not intend that we should focus on the poor to the exclusion of others, but rather that we are called to prioritize those who are in most need of our solidarity.

STEWARDSHIP:

The Earth is sacred. Creation has its own intrinsic value. We have a responsibility to protect and to cherish the Earth's ecological diversity, beauty and life-sustaining properties. Together, we must hold it in trust for future generations.

SUBSIDIARITY & THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT:

The state is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good. Subsidiarity holds that such functions of government should be performed at the lowest level possible, as long as they can be performed adequately. When they cannot, higher levels of government must intervene. This principle goes hand-in-hand with Participation, the principle that all peoples have a right to participate in the economic, political and cultural life of society, and in the decisions that affect their community.

PARTICIPATION:

Human beings are social, and how we live together affects the dignity of the individual and the progress of our society. All persons are entitled to participate in community, and in decisions that affect their lives, and cannot be excluded for any reason.

RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:

We all have a right to those things which are required by human dignity. Rights arise from what we need to live as God intended us to. These are innately linked with our responsibility to ensure the rights of others – that we do not take more than is needed to fulfill our rights at the expense of another's.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE:

The economy must serve people, and not the other way around. All persons have a right to dignified work, and to fair wages and working conditions. Work is more than a way to make a living: it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation.

PEACE:

To be in right relationship with God and with each other. "Peace is a consequence of justice and the sign of love put into action." Where there is peace, "every creature can come to rest in good order." (YouCat 395; St. Thomas Aquinas)