

“He makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak”

1) Are We Hearing the Social Message of the Church?

1. Talking about hearing and speaking, are we hearing everything that Jesus is saying to us through the Church, and bringing this to the attention of others?
2. Pope John Paul has asked: “ how many Christians really know and put into practice the principles of the Church’s Social Teaching?”  
Pope Paul VI said that social problems, because of their urgency, extent and complexity, must take first place among the preoccupations of Christians.
3. Billions, billions!, of our brothers and sisters around the world are suffering hunger and lack of housing, including millions in Canada. In Ontario 1.3 million persons struggle to get enough to eat and have decent housing because of an inadequate welfare system or low wages.
4. Jesus wants to touch our ears and our tongues and get us to hear how the Church is speaking about the principles to go by, in overcoming hunger and lack of proper shelter. He wants us to bring these principles to the attention of governments, groups and organizations.
5. Other people brought the deaf mute to Jesus to be healed. We are called to be friends on behalf of the poor and homeless and call for social justice and social love for them.

2) Labour Day

1. Labour Day is celebrated tomorrow. It was established to celebrate the struggle of workers for recognition of their dignity as human persons and their rights to a family wage and good working conditions.
2. Through uniting together, working in solidarity, joining together in labour unions, workers have vastly improved wages and working conditions, not just for those in unions, but for all workers. Labour unions have raised standards for wages and working conditions for all workers.
3. Through the 19<sup>th</sup> century and through much of the last century, workers struggled against exploitation by the owners of factories, mines, and other industries. Workers had no security. Many employers regarded them as a commodity to be obtained at the lowest cost or wage, like the materials of production.
4. Economic life was governed by a philosophy of “laissez-faire” individualism, which meant let the economy go whatever way it will through free competition, without restricting it by government regulations or by the action of unions. Some of the same philosophy and practice is with us today.
5. Unions were looked upon as enemies of trade and business. Workers who tried to form a union or go on strike were often arrested. Strikes and peaceful demonstrations were broken up by police and troops. Sometimes workers were killed.
6. The life of workers was miserable. They suffered with pittance wages, extremely long working hours, unsafe places of work. Many factories were sweatshops; mines had inhuman working conditions.
7. Pope Leo XIII championed their cause with his encyclical letter on the condition of workers in 1891. He upheld the right of workers to form unions, to receive a living wage, and to have safe working conditions. Since then the Church through our Popes and bishops has continued to uphold the rights of workers.

3) The Church’s Call to Us

1. Our Holy Father and our bishops are looking to our lay people to work for social justice and social love in society, especially for the poor and the downtrodden.
2. In his Exhortation, The Church in America, for North and South America, Pope John Paul said: “Lay people are to strive to evangelize family, social, professional, cultural, economic and political life in America, marked as it is by competition, aggressiveness, unbridled consumerism, and corruption. ... If the teachings of the divine and natural law are to be upheld, it is essential to promote knowledge of the Church’s social doctrine.” (44, 63)
3. The Church’s social doctrine is an essential part of the Christian message, at the very heart of her ministry.

4. Five of the basic principles of this doctrine are the dignity of the human person, solidarity, the common good, subsidiarity, the goods of the earth are for all.
5. You can apply these principles in your own family, then in all the groups of which you are a member: workplace, parish, school, and so on.
6. Solidarity means realizing the interdependence of all the members of a group, and building up mutual support of one another.
7. The common good means working for conditions that contribute to the welfare and development of each individual member of your groups. It can be expressed as “all working for the good of each one, each one working for the good of all”. “All for one, one for all”.
8. Subsidiarity means not taking over what other people or groups can do for themselves. You can even apply this to your dealings with your children.
9. The other two, the respect owed to each human person, and a fair sharing of the goods of the earth, are pretty self evident.
10. The Second Reading today drives home what favouritism is. The poor are not regarded with respect. Their dignity as human persons, equal to all of us, is ignored.

#### 4) What Can You do?

10. The main way you can bring about change for good is by working with others, working in solidarity with others. This the way to practice the virtues of social justice and social love. It’s working with others to overcome systems and practices that are unjust, and make things good for each and all, promoting mutual respect, harmony and unity
11. You can start in a small way, by getting one or two others to work with you, in your workplace, school, parish, even in your family as husband and wife or brother and sister.

#### Transition to Eucharist

Jesus touches us, “lays hands on us” now in the Eucharist, as we receive him  
in Holy Communion. “Power went out from him”.

The Risen Jesus, present in the Mass, draws us into the saving power of his  
Death and Resurrection.

From him we receive the power of his Death to overcome all that is wrong,  
within us, around us, in our world.

From him, we receive the power of his Spirit for life, vigour, love, understanding,  
and direction to deal with our present social problems and suffering.

Let us offer ourselves and all we do with him, as we share in his Saving Offering.

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RESOURCE: The Social Attitudes of a Catholic – Rev. Michael Ryan, (retired Professor of Catholic Social Doctrine, St. Peter’s Seminary, London, ON). Short, easy to read articles on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, which could be adapted for homilies. Order from:

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