

Free essay about justice: pre-requisite for a good that is common

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(Summary)

Justice is one pre-requisite for the common good, the others being solidarity and freedom. Common good requires an understanding that human beings depend upon one another for happiness. Common good cannot be achieved if some sections of the society are marginalized. Only a united society can have solidarity. The good of one individual depends on the good of another individual and vice versa. Hence, every individual must be just towards the other. According to Thomas Aquinas, justice is the greatest virtue. One, who has a sense of justice, directs his actions towards the good of others. Every individual has two roles to play: he acts as an individual on a personal level, and he participates in the common life shared by all individuals in the community. Hence, Thomas Aquinas differentiates between two types of justice: ' general justice' is directed towards the common good of the whole community and ' particular justice' that spells the specific duties of individuals like the duty of a mother towards her children. The latter type of justice is the sign of a virtuous life. An employer who is just must pay wages to the employee.

If common good is to be achieved, citizens must understand the meaning of general justice and develop it as a habit, so that they can develop a system which caters to the common good of the whole nation and extending to the global boundaries. John Paul II has stated that solidarity is a moral bond, a moral responsibility of the powerful people towards the weaker ones in society. It is also a bond that links the poor to each other as a group that has to confront the inefficiency or corruption of the public officials. It is opposed to any kind of greed, indication of power or authority. The Pope has listed

human sins that oppose solidarity. The list includes usurping basic human rights, attacking fellow-beings, racial, cultural or religious discrimination, violence, terrorism, torture, utilizing funds for military purposes instead of using them for constructive and beneficial purposes and increasing discrimination between the rich and the poor. All these phenomena divide communities and affect their solidarity.

It is difficult to discuss the meaning of justice in detail. To put it briefly, justice implies some minimum participation of each individual in the activities directed towards common good. If put in a negative way it means excluding some individuals deliberately from activities oriented towards the common good on certain grounds. It means treating some individuals as ‘non-members’ of the human race. The United States Bishops have used the term ‘marginalization’ for this act of excluding some people from common activities. Just as justice can take many forms, this kind of injustice can take many forms. Politically, individuals are not permitted to vote, even in a democracy. Some people are denied the freedom of speech. Concentrating power in the hands of a few who take advantage of their power and tyrannize the weaker section is also a form of injustice. There is economic injustice when some people are denied employment, their right to work and earn a living. There is injustice when some people are poor and hungry while others have resources enough to feed them, but they do not share their wealth with the needy. They fail in their duty towards the common good. The United Nations Bishops state that the hungry and poor people in the country cannot be considered as a part of the commonwealth in the true sense. The fact that such conditions are tolerated show that we are far from any kind of

commitment towards the common good. In order to establish minimum justice, one has to confront such situations, not avoid them or tolerate them.

The root cause of divisions in America are not false notions of the citizens about happiness or individual goals; the real cause is the avoidance of citizens to admit that there are poor and marginalized people in the society and the privileged people owe a duty towards them.

Hence, justice means respecting the freedom of others, participating in activities for the common good, not tolerating or avoiding injustice, inequality or discrimination and maintain the solidarity of the nation. All the virtues are linked and the total effect is common good.