

Synthesizing social justice and restorative justice assignment



Three major themes that we have talked about so far are where can we find/see God, the beneficial effects of restorative Justice, and helping a cause not only for the effects of charity, but also for the effects of Justice. First, in class, we talked about how we can find and see God in the Biblical foundations and in the Sacraments. Many of us discussed our “ images of God”. For me, my image of God is on a very personal level.

Although I have only ever attended Catholic school for my entire life, I wouldn't identify “ my God” with all of the confined and contradictory teachings and doctrines of the church. For example, we can see God's grace and goodness in the Gospel in the parable concerning the slaves and the bags of gold. In this parable we see the phrase, “ the first shall be last and the last shall be first”. God emphasizes love and attention to those who really need it. We receive the sacraments as a way of letting God into our lives and strengthening or confirming our position in the Church.

By definition, a sacrament is an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual divine grace. God is evident in the processes of the sacraments (I. E. Baptism, Communion, Reconciliation, Confirmation, etc.) through his grace. A sacrament is more than just going through the motions, but only if you choose and try for it to be more than that. Similar to characteristics of Catholic Social Teaching, sacraments call us to a greater family, community, and participation. We can find and see God working through the sacraments to give us divine grace.

Next, we talked a lot about restorative Justice. Restorative Justice is a system of criminal Justice that focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders through

reconciliation to victims and the community at large. Similar to how we can find God in the sacrament of Reconciliation, criminals and offenders who partake in Restorative Justice often find/see God in the reconciliation process of the system. It is a theory of Justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused or revealed by criminal behavior, best accomplished through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders.

While it has foundations in the Old and New Testaments, it is not just a Christian concept. Restorative Justice is indigenous to many cultures around the world and has been practiced for millennia. The principles of restorative Justice are simple. Restorative Justice recognizes that crime harms people. It does not simply break a law. The Justice system should aim to repair these injuries. Crime is also more than a matter between the government and an individual offender. Since crime victims and the community bear the brunt of crime, they, too, must be actively involved in the criminal Justice process.

In the book that we are reading in class, *Tattoos on the Heart*, Father Greg Boyle uses this type of Justice process in a way. He helps the most vulnerable who are involved with gangs, violence, and/or drugs recover from that life, and reconcile with the past, in hopes for a better and more successful retributive Justice system of a court/the law would treat them. We continually see and talk about in class how both Restorative Justice efforts, and Father Gregg work with Homeboy Industries are beneficial and are working efficiently for the good of everyone involved.

Lastly is the theme of helping a cause not only for the effects of charity, but also for the effects of Justice. This concept is exemplified very well through

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Dry. Pane's "Neighborhood" project/videos, and also in Tattoos on the Heart. Dry. Hauser Payne did a project in the "ghetto" areas of the inner city of Wilmington, shedding light on the many problems and struggles that the residents face on a daily basis, and also shedding light on a cycle which many are born into or stuck in.

He does research in Wilmington communities of Stateside and Sturbridge, talking to residents about street crime and their surroundings. He makes the residents feel appreciated, and like they are being heard, or at least someone cares about what he/she has to say. Hauser Payne isn't just doing this for the fact of charity work being a nice act, but also to bring awareness and hopefully justice and restoration to an area, which, as Payne makes obvious to us, is in need of help and reformation.

Father Greg Bayle also strives to bring restoration and reconciliation to the lives of those caught in a cycle or community filled with violence, gangs, drugs, alcoholism, and MUCH more. The Catholic church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Dry. Payne and Father Greg both acknowledge this key aspect of the Catholic Social Teaching. How we organize our society- in economics and politics, in law and policy- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.

The CAST also says how "a basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring". Throughout this course so far, a lot of the material that we have been covering can connect back to one or more themes of the Catholic Social Teaching: life and dignity of the human person, call to family,

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community, and participation, rights and susceptibilities, option for the poor and vulnerable, the dignity of work and the rights of workers, solidarity, and care for God's creation.

I think things like Restorative Justice and different charity things are greatly benefiting our world, and will continue to do so if we keep up with these causes. Especially wing on behalf of restorative Justice, I really think that system can really help our world by helping to eliminate crimes and offenses in the long run and actually help criminals and offenders if needed, rather than just trying to find quick, short term solutions and throwing someone in Jail.