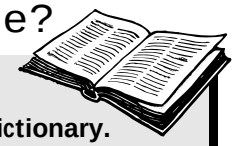
CAFOD
just one world

fact sheet

Justice and the Eucharist

At the heart of the problems the world faces – poverty, hunger, oppression, and war – we can see a lack of justice or fairness. How is this linked to our celebration of the Eucharist when we go to Mass?

What is justice?

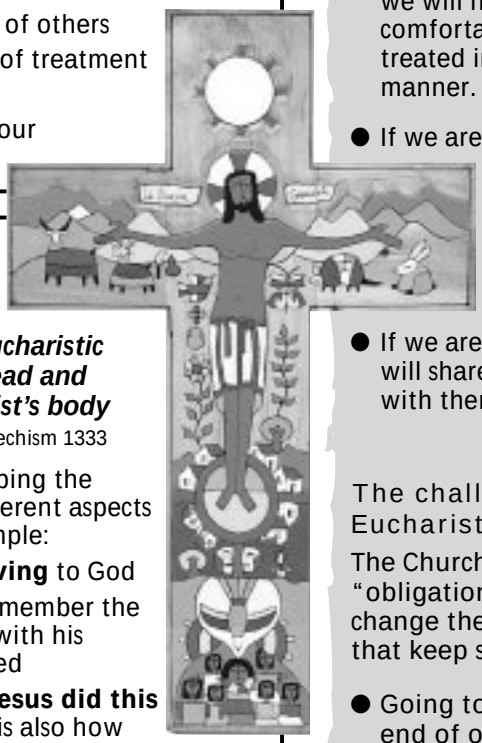


TRY THIS:

- **Look up justice in a dictionary. What does justice mean to you?**
- **Write your own definition.**

CAFOD believes that justice is not only about keeping the law. It is:

- Respect for the rights of others
- Fairness and equality of treatment
- The common good
- Honesty and truth in our relationships

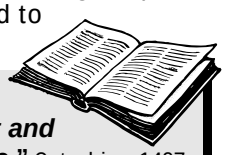


What is the Eucharist?

"At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that become Christ's body and blood." Catechism 1333

Different ways of describing the Eucharist emphasise different aspects of its meaning. For example:

- Eucharist – **thanksgiving** to God
- Lord's Supper – we remember the last **meal** Jesus took with his disciples before he died
- Breaking of Bread – **Jesus did this** at the Last Supper. It is also how Christians have identified themselves since the days of the Early Church
- Memorial – **remembering** Jesus' death and resurrection and all God **is doing and has done** for us
- Sacrifice – Jesus **laid down his life** so that everyone could know what God's love means
- Holy Communion – we are **united** with Christ as one body
- Holy Mass – from *missio* (**sending out**) – we are sent out into the world to do God's will



TRY THIS:

"The Eucharist is the heart and summit of the Church's life." Catechism 1407

- **Look this up in the Catechism. What do "heart" and "summit" mean here?**

What does the Eucharist ask of us?

The Eucharist is:

"...a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity..."

Catechism 1323

- If we love our neighbours we will not feel comfortable until they are treated in a just and fair manner.
- If we are united with them we will support them and take action for change with them.
- If we are charitable we will share what we have with them.

The challenge of the Eucharist

The Church says we have an "obligation in justice" to change the unjust systems that keep some people poor.

- Going to Mass is not the end of our commitment – we need to connect what happens in the Mass with the world outside.
- When we receive communion we are responding to a challenge. We are meeting Christ and we are asked to recognise him in everyone we meet. He asks us to share what we have with one another.
- We have to be involved in our world in the way Jesus was in his. This not only helps others – it makes us more like Christ. It is an invitation to change.

Mission

At the Last Supper Jesus showed us the link between his mission and ours. He washed his disciples' feet, putting himself at the service of others. See John 13:15;34.

Unity and community

The word *communion* reminds us of *union* and *community*. We celebrate our **union** with Christ and our **community** with people locally and globally.

Action

Before we participate in the Eucharist we are asked to recognise what we have done and what we have failed to do in our relationship with God and other people. We are hypocrites if we accept the blessings we are given without taking any action to change things. Can we celebrate the Eucharist whilst ignoring people in need?

TRY THIS:

"Do not honour Jesus here in church clothed in silk vestments and then pass him by unclothed and frozen outside."

St John Chrysostom

See also Matthew 5:23-24.

- **In pairs: Discuss what you think this means.**

This sheet does not tell you everything you need to know about the Eucharist and the Church's teaching. It focuses on one important aspect – justice.

Sharing food and justice

TRY THIS:

- **Think of a special meal you have shared with your family or friends. What made it special?**

The Eucharist is a celebration and a sharing. Sharing a meal can be a special occasion anywhere but many people today go hungry. Hunger is not inevitable, it is an injustice. There are many other injustices in today's world:

If the world were a village of 1000 people:

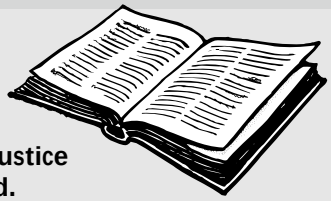
500 would have to walk two hours to the nearest telephone

335 would not have the chance to learn to read and write

333 would not have safe, clean drinking water

70 would own cars

Only **one** would have a computer



TRY THIS:

- **Which of these facts surprised you most? Find more facts about injustice on the website suggested.**
- **What do you think are the main causes of poverty in the Third World? See CAFOD's poverty fact sheet.**
- **"*To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation, to prisoners freedom and to those in sorrow joy.*"**

  Eucharistic Prayer IV

  Why do you think this prayer is said at Mass?
- **"*It is by my deeds that I will show you my faith.*"**

  James 2:18

  How can we live more justly? Make a list of ways in which our lives and our faith could be more closely linked.
- **Imagine your younger brother or sister is preparing for First Communion. In a few words explain what the Eucharist is and what it means for you.**
- **Find out about Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador who was murdered in 1980. What do his life and death tell us about the connection between justice and the Eucharist? See CAFOD's Fairground, issue 18.**

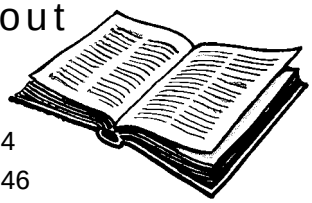
What does CAFOD believe?

- CAFOD looks forward to a world where everyone has enough to live on and no one is left out
- CAFOD works with people in the Third World to tackle the problems of poverty. CAFOD campaigns against injustice
- CAFOD tries to put the Gospel into practice – "to bring the good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18)

In the Sunday Eucharist, the believing heart opens wide to embrace all aspects of the Church. But... far from trying to create a narrow "gift" mentality, St Paul calls rather for a demanding culture of sharing, to be lived not only among the members of the community itself but also in society as a whole.

Pope John Paul II
(see 1 Corinthians 16:2)

Check it out



Micah 6:8
Isaiah 58:6-8
Matthew 5:23-24
Matthew 25:31-46
Catechism section 2, chapter 1, article 3

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