



# Matthew 25

...whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine,  
you did for me.

The Social Justice Committee Newsletter  
of St. Mary's Catholic Center, College Station, Texas

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## Have you included in your prayer a prayer for the common good?

By Fr. Chris Downey, Associate Pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Center

Every human person has been created by God and is endowed with unique talents and abilities that can only be fully realized within the context of the community. For a community to be just, it must provide the proper conditions that promote the realization of those unique talents and abilities and thus allow for human flourishing. The Church calls such proper conditions *the common good* and defines it as "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily." (Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, #26, 1965)

*"But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy." (1 Cor. 12: 24-26)*

### What is the Common Good?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the common good is comprised of three elements: respect for and promotion of the fundamental rights of every human person; the development of the spiritual and temporal goods of society; the peace and security of the group and its members. Let's examine these elements in closer detail.

First, all life is sacred from conception until natural death. If we attempt to undermine this basic fact, we do violence to the promotion of the common good. Secondly, discrimination based on a person's sex, ethnicity, race, creed, and national origin is unacceptable as well since such discrimination is "incompatible with God's design (*Gaudium et Spes*, #29)." All people and organizations, both public and private, need to work toward creating conditions where the respect and dignity of the human person is primary.

Second, there must be in place those resources that aid in the development of each person's or group's (group = cultural grouping) well-being. The just society needs to provide access to food, clothing, housing, education, and especially "the right to act according to the dictates of conscience and safeguard his privacy, and rightful freedom even in matters of religion (*Gaudium et Spes*, #26)." Note: this is not to suggest that the civil authorities are to *provide* such things; rather, the civil authorities need to allow for an environment where *accesses* to such things are plentiful. In the United States, the free market is the means by which people access such opportunities. In the

event that some are unable to access the free market, it may be necessary for private organizations or government to assist where needed, or to do all in their power to create situations for them to gain access the market.

Last, for the common good to be a reality, peaceful and stable conditions must exist. An adequate military and local police force is of paramount importance for the maintaining of peaceful conditions, so that the common good can be in place for people to access.

### Who is Responsible and how do we Participate in the Common Good?

All people in the community are obligated to work toward the promotion of the common good. This is rooted in the basic principle that all human person's have dignity which can never be taken away. There is a hymn from a few years back called "Let There Be Peace on Earth and Let it Begin With Me." To know one's self and be responsible for one's self - which is only possible through access to the common good - allows for the good of the person and society. Each person has been given certain abilities and talents and with such gifts, there is responsibility

attached. All individuals are expected to assume a basic responsibility for themselves through their work, education, and family, and in doing so, "man participates in the good of others and of society" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1914). As long as the conditions are right where all have access to the common good, people, through the development of their talents, can lift up others

*"The principle of the common good, to which every aspect of social life must be related if it is to attain its fullest meaning, stems from the dignity, unity, and equality of all people."*

(Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. #164)

through their work. An example of this would be a person who has been gifted with an entrepreneurial spirit, develops his potential by creating a company and jobs. Others benefit from his spirit by taking jobs and providing for their families.

Included in such responsibility is for individuals, as far as possible, to actively participate in public life. The more people are involved in participation, the healthier the society because it is a sign that "a climate of genuine freedom" exists whereby people feel their voice is heard and they can be confident that what they have to offer can and will directly affect others and society (CCC, #1915). But such a climate can only come about by a "renewed *conversion* of the social partners (CCC, #1916)." This renewal is necessary to prevent fraud and other corruption that only serves to poison the common good. So, the deadbeat dad, the corrupt politician or businessman are called to personal conversion so that their ways do not hurt the common good and thus impede others' access to it.

### **What can be done to promote the common good?**

First and foremost, we must stand up for life and for the promotion of the family since all life is sacred and the family is the basic unit where spousal relations and child-rearing are nourished. This requires greater participation of individuals in society to freely voice their opposition to unjust laws that negatively impact the dignity of the human person of the sanctity of marriage and family life. Such participation presupposes that individuals are adequately informed of the issues affecting the sacredness of life and family life, and the way to do this is to become educated about the civil laws currently on the books that depart from promotion of the dignity of the human person and family life.

In addition to education, we can volunteer our time and talent to reach those who are less fortunate than we are.

This can be done in two ways: first, directly assisting people through donation of our time by being the hands and feet of Jesus to them. And secondly, by putting our talents to use that provide structures for people, especially the marginalized, to access the common good. This could include getting involved in politics and working toward enacting laws that promote access to the common good. It could also entail donation of our talent and treasure in providing non-profit programs that aid people. An example of this may be using our expertise in certain areas - i.e. financial planning, medical, legal advice, etc. - to help

people develop their potential. Or, another way would be to donate to charities that promote the common good. A word of caution: it is incumbent upon us to research the goals and affiliation of any charitable organization to make sure such principles are in tune with the common good as understood by the Catholic Church.

### **Opinion**

I believe that too often, we may give into the temptation that the less fortunate are in such positions *only* because of bad choices they made in their life. While there may be a certain degree of truth in such belief, we are called as Christians to have the heart of Christ the Good Shepherd who was not content with one sheep being left behind. God has given us the means to help others, and through prayer and the development of our own potential, were are mandated by God to use such gifts at the service of others.

I also think we need to become more involved in the political process by educating ourselves on the issues that affect our country. It seems that too many people are content in their own world and are not paying attention to legislation that may not be promoting the common good. In failing to be involved, we are indirectly responsible for other people who are unable to develop their potential by accessing the common good.

*"The greater [a person] seems to be, the more humbly he ought to act, and the more zealous he should be for the common good rather than his own interest."*  
(from a Letter to the Corinthians by Pope St. Clement)

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Are you interested in Social Justice issues? Do you wish to know more about the Catholic Social Teaching? Would you like to find opportunities of service in line with your faith?  
Visit the table of these St. Mary's organizations at Kick Off (Sept 5 after all masses) or contact them by email:  
**Social Justice Committee**, StMarysSocialJustice@gmail.com  
**ASAP** (Aggies Serving Another Person), ASAPvolunteer@gmail.com  
**SMAPL** (St. Mary's Aggies Promoting Life), aggiecatholicSMAPL@gmail.com  
**Prison Ministry**, dreded@aggiecatholic.org  
Or check out St. Mary's website (www.aggiecatholic.org) in the 'Programs & Organizations' menu the 'Social Concerns' page.