

Ask Fr. James,

I have an interest in Social Justice. What are the current social justice issues that the Catholic Church is concerned about?

During Since Jesus preached the Beatitudes in (Matthew 5:1-12) and the parable of the final judgment (Matthew 25:31-41), the church has ever been mindful of social justice issues. All the Popes, especially, in the modern era, starting with Pope Leo XIII who in 1891 gave the seven principles of Catholic Social Doctrine until the present Pope Francis who has recently outlined the focus of the Catholic action as:

1. Reverence for life - pro-life issues (Abortion and Euthanasia (assisted suicide))
2. Human trafficking for procurement of organs from the poor
3. Refugees, ethnic minorities, prisoners, and other marginalized persons
4. The buying, selling, brokering, and implanting of organs and tissues from trafficked persons
5. Altruistic organ sharing with others, either as a last act of gifting organs at brain death or as a living gift of a kidney to a loved one or a stranger in dire need
6. Indigenous Peoples issues and
7. Environmental issues

Concerning the #2 ABOVE, It is Pope Francis' wishes to define global human trafficking as 'modern slavery' and as a 'crime against humanity' and to have the United Nations (UN) include the problem of human trafficking within the UN initiatives on global economic and environmental sustainability. He also desired that #3 above, the sharing of organs with others, freely and without compensation be accepted as a commendable act of mercy.

To help promote the Church's social justice campaign, Pope Francis invited world scholars, human rights activists, governmental and United Nations (UN) representatives and civil society leaders, spiritual leaders across the world's religions, police chiefs from 20 countries, nuns and people working with migrant workers and with sex workers and transplant surgeons who have been active in condemning human trafficking for organs, to a meeting with members of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (PASS) at the Vatican. At the meeting, Pope Francis said;

'these new forms of slavery are, in some ways, worse and more inhumane than those of the past' and that 'forced labour, prostitution and organ trade are very serious crimes, a wound on the body of contemporary humanity... First we have to be more aware of this new evil [human trafficking] that everyone in the global world, would like to hide because it is outrageous and politically incorrect. Nobody likes to admit that new forms of slavery exist in their own city, even in their own neighbourhood, in their own region or country...'

It is sad to know that some children and young adults are trafficked by their own relatives who pay for their unsafe voyages. Our Archdiocese has a Social Justice office which at the moment is concentrated on two of the above listed issues; Refugees sponsorship and environmental concerns as raised in Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si*.

The government of Canada has given the Archdiocese 61 slots for refugee sponsorship for 2017. Parishes are encouraged to phone the Archdiocese to check how they can collaborate to sponsor a family. Every Pastoral Council in our parishes are also asked to spend time at every meeting deliberating on what positive actions they can take as a parish on social justice issues. If you can help or would like to join our parish's social justice committee, please call or visit me in the parish office.

You may email/send your faith questions to Fr. James and he would answer them in our Sunday Bulletin