

Sharing the Faith Journey in your home

Spiritual Traditions Part 2: Social Justice Tradition

By Beth Barnett

Richard Foster's book *Streams of Living Water* and the *Renovare Spiritual Traditions Workbook* for small groups encourages us to reflect on the different ways that people have practiced their discipleship in different ways, in different times and places, contexts and challenges over the centuries. Six major 'traditions' or 'spiritual orientations' or 'ways' are identified:

Contemplative
Incarnational
Holiness

Evangelical
Social Justice
Charismatic

Pick one or a few of the following opportunities in the Social Justice tradition, try them with your household and see what happens.

You will need:

Various websites
Bible passages printed
Bread rolls

Practicing the Social Justice Tradition

The social justice tradition challenges 21st century Western Christians in two dynamic ways. Firstly, in it being SOCIAL justice. That is, it addresses our spirituality communally. It directs us back to the prophets of old who mock any kind of private piety, which does not find correspondence in our life together as a society. We are reminded that God is Lord of all, and how society is organised is as significant and in need of redemption as each individual within it. Structures, administration, systems are not exempt from theological critique. Secondly, we are reminded of the need for social JUSTICE. The Bible is full of exhortations and demands for justice. We know these when we see them, and typically, they are framed in terms of reversals: The crooked made straight, the rough made smooth...(we even use the term 'rough justice' today) the proud brought low and the humble lifted up, the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to leap and the voiceless to speak, while the arrogant are silenced. Walking in the Social Justice tradition means more than being kind, generous, compassionate. It is to think structurally, communally, widely, theologically and to be ready to turn upside down.

Read together:

God loves everyone, in every way. It's easy for the world to get out of balance from the way God has made it to be. Some people end up with more and others with less. Some people are safe, and others in danger. Some people get healthier and stronger, and others get sick and weaker. God wants us to pay attention to what's happening and keep the balance right.



Sometimes this will mean changing the way things are so that we can get back in balance. If it rains more in one area and the food grows well there, we'll need to make sure the extra gets to where it hasn't rained. If there is a cost involved, those who have more money should pay for it. In some things, we've been out of balance for a really long time, so there's lots to do to make things right again. God has given us the Spirit and the example of Jesus to help us know how to do this.

What are the activities of the social justice tradition?

Being aware of others, understanding the world, speaking and acting for others, reversing, turning things upside down.

Some things to do together

Advocating

Advocating means using your voice to advantage another. An 'Advocating' meal is when everybody speaks for someone else (rather than themselves) to make sure that no one misses out on anything. Spread platters of food on your table and then 'advocate' for one another to have dishes passed your way. "Would you please pass the salad to Mum?", "After you've used the sauce, could Jessie have it next?".



FreeRice.com

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The Social Justice Hall of Example

Make a “Hall of Example” by printing out a picture, or better still asking each person in your household to draw a portrait of some significant examples of the social justice tradition: people who have thought not only about how to follow Jesus themselves, but how together in communities in our countries and across the world we can follow God’s good and just ways. Use this as an opportunity to find out a bit more of what these people did.

Some ideas to get you going: Rosa Parkes, Mother Theresa, Oscar Romero, Harriet Tubman. The TEAR website has a file of posters that you can download for free at:

www.tear.org.au/resources/items/campaigners-of-faith-posters/#relatedFiles

Social Justice Lectionary Readings

Session 1: Matthew 14: 13-21, Romans 9:1-5

Session 2: Matthew 14:22-33, Romans 10:5-15

Session 3: Matthew 15:(10-20), 21-28, Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

Session 4: Matthew 16:13-20, Romans 12:1-8

Session 5: Matthew 16:21-28, Romans 12:9-21

Romans 12:9-21: Justice Journaling

Print or copy Romans 12:9-21

A great way to do this is to assign a couple of verses to each person in your household and let them write in their own style and ‘illuminate’ the text as they are inspired.

Spend some time every once in a while looking over the text and highlight the parts that you as a household, or as individuals or that you have seen others have had the opportunity to enact the kind of justice outlined in the passage. Use this to keep a journal of justice striving. You may even like to add news articles or items from your church news, or school bulletin.



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Matthew 14:13-21

After Jesus heard about John, he crossed Lake Galilee to go to some place where he could be alone. But the crowds found out and followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw the large crowd. He felt sorry for them and healed everyone who was sick.

That evening the disciples came to Jesus and said, "This place is like a desert, and it is already late. Let the crowds leave, so they can go to the villages and buy some food."

Jesus replied, "They don't have to leave. Why don't you give them something to eat?" But they said, "We have only five small loaves of bread and two fish."

Jesus asked his disciples to bring the food to him, and he told the crowd to sit down on the grass. Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven and blessed the food. Then he broke the bread and handed it to his disciples, and they gave it to the people.

After everyone had eaten all they wanted, Jesus' disciples picked up twelve large baskets of leftovers. There were about five thousand men who ate, not counting the women and children.

Matthew 14:13-21: **Justice Bread**

Bake some bread rolls for dinner (or warm up some precooked ones). Slice them open and hide the sections of the text of Matthew 14:13-21 inside them. During the meal as each person takes a bread roll, they read part of the passage inside it and as a group everyone asks:

Is something unfair?

How does Jesus care?

How can we make this into a prayer?

Discuss the answers to these questions and pray.

Eg: verse 16-17

Unfair - that there's not enough food.

Jesus shows care by wanting them to solve it together not just go away.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, please help us not to wish that injustice would just go away. Help us to work together with you to make things fair.



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