

Enabling Communities: **EVERYONE HAS A PART TO PLAY**

Social Justice Week 2018:
9 - 15 September

Te Wiki o te Whai Tika 2018:
9 - 15 Hēpetema



**Caritas**
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND
The Catholic Agency for Justice,
Peace & Development


RESOURCES AND LITURGY NOTES
Ngā rauemi me ngā ritenga o kupu



23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year B

9 September 2018





“Each of us has a
part to play, a gift to
share, a service to offer,
for building up the Body of
Christ in love.”

POPE FRANCIS, 2013

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Tuki Russell Karoa Takiwa, Kaumatua of Te Whaea Tapu o Kāpiti (Our Lady of Kāpiti Parish), Paraparaumu.

Ko Tongariro te Maunga

Ko Taupo nui-a-tia te Moana

Ko Tuwharetoa te Iwi

Ko Ngati Manunui, Ngati Hikairo me Ngati Puakawa nui tonu ngā Hapu

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How to use this book

Me pēwhēa te whakamahi i tēnei pukapuka

We hope this book will be useful to Parish Priests, Parish Leadership Teams, Liturgy Committees, Social Justice Groups, Diocesan Justice, Peace and Development Commissions and others who are part of the life of the Church and wider community. We hope it helps to consider how each parish or diocese can include the Social Justice Week theme in their Sunday celebration and activities during the week.

The book is split into three sections. **Section one** provides resources for the lead up to Social Justice Week; **section two** provides resources specifically for Sunday Mass at the beginning of Social Justice Week; and **section three** provides resources for activities outside of Mass.

You will find in each section, background information, ideas, suggestions, inspiration and reflections.

We understand that parishes will choose to take some ideas and leave others or come up with new ideas entirely.

In the end, we hope each parish can consider what it means to truly create an enabling community in which everyone is included, throughout Social Justice Week this year and beyond.

SECTION 1: PREPARATION

WĀHANGA 1: MAHI WHAKARITERITE

What is Social Justice Week?

He aha tēnei mea te Wiki o te Whai Tika?

Social Justice Week was established by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference in 1997 as an ongoing commitment in the Catholic calendar for the week beginning the second Sunday of September.

This is a time to consider, reflect and take action on a particular current social justice issue in the light of Catholic social teaching.

Social Justice Week falls during the liturgical season of Ordinary Time. This is a period in which the liturgical readings teach us about discipleship.

This year the Social Justice Week theme is:

Enabling Communities: Everyone has a part to play

Why include liturgy notes for Social Justice Week?

“A real concern today is that liturgy and social justice tend to be treated as two unrelated activities in the life of the Church... the equality we know at the table of Christ’s Body must be celebrated at all other tables.”

Cardinal Thomas Williams said these words in 1997 at a “Love in Action Day” during an address to a gathering of Catholic charity and social justice groups.

Our liturgical gathering on the Sunday reminds us of Church as community and as a family united in prayer. The mercy and compassion we receive from God flows out into the rest of our week and into our relationships in our wider community.

This book has been prepared with the support of the National Liturgy Office.

New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference Statement on Disability and Participation He Kupu nā te Huinga Pīhopa Katorika mō te Hauātanga me te Whakakotahi

He taonga rongonui te aroha ki te tangata – Goodwill towards others is a precious gift.

“Disability” has different connotations for different people. Some see it is a negative term to be avoided. Others see it as a source of identity and even a badge of honour.


And there are those who see it signifying barriers to people’s full participation in community. Encountering disability can force us to re-evaluate our understanding of God, humanity and the attitudes we hold.

Recently, we your Bishops, reflected together on disability and participation in the life of the Church and society. We remembered the many disabled people we know and love and who have helped inspire us in our journey of faith and life.

As we celebrated the Eucharist together, Alex, a young man with a learning disability who works in the Auckland Diocesan Centre, served as the acolyte for our Mass. His sharing in the mission of Jesus and his pride in his faith is a great source of joy for him and was a great witness for us.

Joy and a sense of inner satisfaction in service are indicators of the Holy Spirit at work in us as we follow the path God intends for us. When we see this in others, we recognise the precious gift each person is called to be.

We enable this in our parishes and schools when we welcome and enable each person to contribute to the life of the community. Each of us, with our unique gifts and challenges, are interdependent. By becoming involved in each other’s lives by our presence and service, we grow together as the body of Christ.



During this Social Justice week, we wish to encourage you to reflect on how we welcome each person, without exception, into the heart of our communities as a precious gift.

To be genuinely included is not just to belong, but to be missed when we are not around. A responsibility rests on us all to encourage and to nurture a sense of belonging and acceptance.

This may mean examining why those with disabilities might not be visible in the life of the parish, be it on committees or in roles of leadership.

In a similar way we encourage parishes and schools to ensure their buildings are accessible and inclusive, places of genuine welcome so all may see themselves as integral members of the community, so it may become a true life-giving community that reflects the fullness of life that Jesus promises.

Jesus welcomed everybody into his circle of friends – the poor, sinners, outcasts, the sick and disabled. No one was excluded. Everybody was transformed by their encounter with Jesus, and in turn, their presence among the disciples became a mark of the early Christian communities. At the heart of our faith communities, we must continue to nurture our understanding that we are enriched and vitalised through the diversity of members.

In this Social Justice Week, may we all grow in awareness of those whom we include and those to whom we reach out, and may our parishes, schools and places of work be strengthened by enabling all in our communities to play their part fully, so all are enriched. Such goodwill towards others is indeed a precious gift.

- ✠ Patrick Dunn, Bishop of Auckland and NZCBC President
- ✠ Charles Drennan, Bishop of Palmerston North and NZCBC Secretary
- ✠ John Dew, Cardinal Archbishop of Wellington
- ✠ Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Hamilton
- ✠ Paul Martin, Bishop of Christchurch
- ✠ Michael Dooley, Bishop of Dunedin

Background: Dignity for all

He Whakataki: Whakamanahia te katoa

“Every child, every person needs to know that they are a source of joy; every child, every person, needs to be celebrated. Only when all of our weaknesses are accepted as part of our humanity can our negative, broken self-images be transformed.”

Jean Vanier, “Becoming Human”, 1998

Modern society has conditioned us to see the values of others by utility. For example: knowledge, physical abilities, creativity, and more. This way of thinking has isolated us from our neighbours, ourselves and God. Catholic social teaching (CST) says that each person is a gift from God. It calls us to value the individual for simply being.


Furthermore, we must consider our value, strength, abilities as a community. A Māori whakataukī captures this idea for us: Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini – my achievements and strengths are not those of the individual, but those of the many.

The CST principles of human dignity and participation are especially key when considering what it looks like to be inclusive, and to allow each person to partake in every dimension of social and family life, to the extent of their possibilities.

Enabling Communities draws from last year’s Social Justice Week theme of **Weaving Bonds of Belonging** to understand, acknowledge, value, and appreciate our individual gifts and their part in the whole.

Do we as New Zealanders enable communities?

Disabled communities are one of the largest groups of people who are overlooked or marginalised in New Zealand. According to Statistics New Zealand’s 2013 Disability Survey: 24% of the New Zealand population identified as disabled, a total of 1.1 million people.



People aged 65 and older were much more likely to be disabled (59%) than adults under 65 years (21%) and children under 15 (11%). People living with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and their average weekly incomes were just over half of those living without disabilities.

There is concern around the invisibility of the experiences of people living with disabilities – both inside and outside the Catholic Church. There is also concern around associated issues of poverty, discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion. In addition, there are debates about euthanasia and abortion of unborn children with disabilities or at risk of such.

We must remind ourselves that we are first and foremost: valued creations of God – we are not defined by our physical, sensory, mental or intellectual capacity.

We must also take time to listen, learning from others and ourselves; about resilience and strength in the face of society's limitations. And we must take action to ensure each and every one of us can be all that we are meant to be, free from barriers or obstacles.

For more information about disabilities and inclusion from a Catholic social teaching perspective, turn to the section: Delving into the Theme on page 26.

Catholic social teaching and disability ***Ngā ākoranga Katorika mō te Hauātanga***

These are excerpts from the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church that relate to disability and Catholic social teaching.

An electronic version of the Compendium can be found at:
www.vatican.va.

Human Dignity

“Since something of the glory of God shines on the face of every person, the dignity of every person before God is the basis of the dignity of man before other men” (Compendium 144). God has made each person in His image. Each person is not defined by their intellect, capability, or position in any category or power system. In fact, a lack of any of these things does not undermine the inviolable nature of a person’s dignity.

Solidarity

“The new relationships of interdependence between individuals and peoples, which are de facto forms of solidarity, have to be transformed into relationships tending towards genuine ethical-social solidarity. This is a moral requirement inherent within all human relationships.” (Compendium 193).

It is the relationships we form with each other that promote and restore health. We are not isolated, we are interconnected. As we walk with each other and listen to the unique lived experiences of others who are different to ourselves, we must sow seeds of tenderness.

Participation

As well as actively playing our part in the structures of society around us, we must ensure that our brothers and sisters can do the same.

“Persons with disabilities are fully human subjects, with rights and duties,” therefore, “they are to be helped to participate in every dimension of family and social life at every level accessible to them and according to their possibilities” (Compendium 148).

To help others to live to their fullest potential is to promote true participation, enabling all to exercise the gifts given to them by God.

To do so, we must ensure each and every citizen is “informed, listened to and involved” in the execution of his or her civic role (Compendium 190).



Angela Murray & Michael Stewart, Avalon Community Hall – Wellington JLD

Liturgy notes and preparing for Social Justice Week

Ngā tuhinga ritenga o te kupu me te mahi whakariterite mō te Wiki o te Whai Tika

In the weeks leading up to Social Justice Week, we invite parishes to consider using some of the following ideas:

Poster: Put up a Social Justice Week poster in each Mass centre two weeks before Social Justice Week: before the 26th of August.

Parish newsletter: Include Social Justice Week information in the bulletin notes in the lead up to the 9th of September 2018. You may choose to use the following text as an example or go to www.caritas.org.nz/parishes/social-justice-week to access images that you can use on parish or diocesan social media pages.

Social Justice Week: 9th – 15th September 2018

Enabling Communities: Everyone has a part to play

“Each of us has a part to play, a gift to share, a service to offer, for building up the Body of Christ in love.” – Pope Francis

“Social Justice Week occurs every September and is promoted by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference. Every year we focus on a social justice issue in New Zealand, and this year we are focusing on removing obstacles that prevent those of us with disabilities from fully participating in society. Our theme is “Enabling Communities: Everyone has a part to play”.

Let us take up the challenge to promote full participation for each and every person in our communities.”

Please also include details of your nearest workshop, or if there is not one held near you, consider using the workshop kit at www.caritas.org.nz/parishes/social-justice-week to run your own.

Brochure: Include the Social Justice Week reflection brochure: “A Reflection for Social Justice Week 2018” with each parish newsletter on the 9th September and make it available to parishioners.

PowerPoint: Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand has created a PowerPoint presentation with photos and quotes applicable to the topic of disability and the importance of enabling participation for all members within our communities. Use this presentation before Mass on Social Justice Sunday. This can be found on our website at: www.caritas.org.nz/parishes/social-justice-week.

Workshops: Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand is working with Diocesan Justice, Peace and Development Commissions to facilitate local workshops in some locations.

We’ve also produced a workshop kit, available through our website, so if you can’t get to one of the workshops, you can run your own. Our workshops are a great way to dive into the topic with others and come away with concrete actions for you and your parish.

Liturgy and Parish Council meetings: Use this booklet as a discussion point during a Parish Council or Liturgy Committee meeting.

Reflect together on the Social Justice Week theme in relation to parish life:

- Who are the people in your parish who live with disability?
- What are the beliefs, thoughts and attitudes that exist within the parish regarding disability? Do these enable or disable each of us to participate?
- In what ways are people in your parish prevented from participating in church life because of your buildings or facilities? If you could, how would you alter your physical facilities to enable them?

- In what ways can your parish facilitate better connectedness between those of us with disabilities and those of us without?
- Using the “Creating Welcoming Churches” booklet or the enclosed checklist, consider how accessible is your church community?

Suggested community activities:

At-home activities for families: Many of the resources prepared for Catholic schools are great for parents to use at home with their children, no matter what their age. Encourage your parishioners to access these resources online at caritas.org.nz/social-justice-schools.

Shared meal: Organise a shared meal after Mass during Social Justice Week to provide an opportunity for parishioners to get to know each other. To ensure the event is accessible and inclusive, ask parishioners who live with disability what needs they have that would ensure they are able to attend.

Neighbourhood prayer gathering: Organise a neighbourhood prayer gathering before or after Mass, at a central point to the parish neighbourhood. The gathering can be long or short depending on what is appropriate. During the prayer gathering, invite participants to give thanks and pray for any needs you see in your local community.

SECTION 2: CELEBRATION

WĀHANGA 2: TE WHAKANUI



An excerpt from *Laudato Si'*, 2015, #237

“On Sunday, our participation in the Eucharist has special importance. Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world.

Sunday is the day of Resurrection, the ‘first day’ of the new creation, whose first fruits are the Lord’s risen humanity, the pledge of the final transfiguration of all created reality.

It also proclaims ‘humanity’s eternal rest in God.’ In this way, Christian spirituality incorporates the value of relaxation and festivity.

...Rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others. And so the day of rest, centred on the Eucharist, sheds its light on the whole week, and motivates us to greater concern for nature and the poor.”

Readings and Gospel reflections

He whakaaroaro mō ngā Tuhituhinga Tapu me ngā Rongopai

2018 Social Justice Week Sunday – 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Gospel and readings reflection by Fr Merv Duffy:
“Can’t you see?”**

In the gospel, a deaf man is brought to Jesus and Jesus touches his ears and his tongue and says “Ephphatha” (“EF-fah-tha” which is not easy to say) and the man spoke clearly. The name Jesus means “Yahweh saves.”

This Gospel story is one of many which makes it clear that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the one whose coming to save us had been prophesied.

The Church tells the story of Jesus saying “be opened” over and again, because we believe that this word of Jesus is not just a word for that man in that country at that time.

In the Liturgy of Baptism rite there is an Ephphatha rite, these words would have been said over you when the priest, after pouring the water over you, touched your ears and mouth and prayed.


The Church presents “be opened” as a word for all Christians. We need our eyes opened and our ears unstopped.

What are we not hearing? What are we blind to?

The Letter of James gives one answer to that question. “Do not try to combine faith in Jesus Christ, our glorified Lord, with the making of distinctions between classes of people.”

James gives the example of how a rich person and a poor one might be treated on arriving for worship, and then asks the question:

Can’t you see?



Can you not see that you have used a double standard? You have treated the rich person as “better,” “more worthy” before God. Without noticing that you are doing it, you have one standard for judging wealthy people and another for judging poor people. This does not strike James as at all Christian – you have “turned yourselves into judges, and corrupt judges at that?”

Today is the beginning of Social Justice Week. The week begins with us hearing the word “Ephphatha” – and in this week we need to open our eyes to how we and our world treat different groups of people.

Because of our faith in Jesus Christ, our glorified Lord, we should be out to see justice done for all. Because our tongues have been loosened, we need to speak up for those who are silenced. Because our legs work, we should stand with the oppressed.

One group that gets excluded in our society are those of us with disabilities – and our bishops want us to be inclusive, to not make distinctions, to open our eyes and see the person, not a problem.

In that way this word of Jesus will become flesh in this week.

Reflection from the Disability Faith Community, Auckland

What is notable about this reading, is that Jesus took the man aside, away from the crowd, respecting his privacy and dignity. Jesus then tells the people not to tell others, but they go and do so anyway.

Also, the Scripture says the man had a ‘speech impediment’, but later the crowd says, ‘He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.’

A speech impaired person reflects: Was the man fully mute or could he speak but could not be understood? People who speak differently from the majority of people often find that they are not understood at first however after a time people may be able to understand.

This may be because the person speaking may speak better because of feeling relaxed and confident and their speech improves. Or those listening may attune their ears to the person's speech patterns.

Often it is a combination of the speaker being comfortable to express themselves and listeners learning to listen in new ways. People may hear what they want to hear or expect; when they're actually hearing in a more considered way: they've learnt how to listen.

We all need to encourage a respectful environment where people are able to express themselves (sometimes through computers, pictures, symbols or other means) and listen with care to each other. Everyone needs to be accepted for who they are.

It's also 'other people' who bring the deaf man to Jesus and beg him to lay his hand on the man. We don't know what is going on in the man's mind, nor his own response to Jesus' healing. The need or desirability of 'healing' on someone else's terms can be questioned.


A woman with a mobility impairment says, "I don't believe my purpose that God has for me is anything to do with my physical impairment. I don't think that my disability is the reason why I'm on this earth." With regard to healing she says: "I'm happy with who I am. What's more important to me is that I'm spiritually whole."

When you meet someone who accepts you, you don't need to explain - that's being inclusive.

Healing may need to take place in people who have created barriers in themselves to hearing and engaging with people with impairments as fellow human beings.

Reflection from Sr Joan Hardiman

Do you remember ever feeling left out? Being in the wrong place? Not being quite the same as the people all around, even though you have no disability apart from being a stranger, (or poor, or gay, or



just out of prison)? After Jesus was rejected by his home town (Lk 4:28,29), he too would have known what it's like to be an outsider.

Getting rid of people was common in Jesus' day. Remember the lepers? At that time, having a disability was thought to be the result of sin and such people should be shunned. Yet Jesus sought out those disadvantaged people, gave them new hope, healing and a right to inclusion in society.

In today's Gospel we find the crowd bringing to Jesus a man with a hearing and speech impediment. The first thing Jesus does is take the man off by himself away from the crowd. The first voice the man will hear is Jesus inviting him to greater openness. But what the man says, Mark does not tell us.

What Mark does do is throw down a challenge to us to be open to the needs of the marginalised. We discover in Mark's gospel a strong call to radical discipleship; a grounded Christian experience of following Jesus, being open enough to "hear" those swamped by social exclusion that comes from disability of one kind or another. (That is, at a greater risk of poverty; poorer access to housing or employment.)

Can we be welcoming enough to "see" a way through the difficulties, impartially as the letter to James recommends; and giving praise as described in Isaiah? Can we be welcoming enough to overcome our own awkwardness or status?

Here are some questions to ask yourselves:

- If you have no disability, how welcome are those with disabilities in your own community or circle of friends? What's in it for them? What could you share with them?
- How easy is it to acknowledge our own disability or prejudice?
- How does a response to a needy or desperate situation bring forth the best in ourselves?

Reflection from Fr Tom Rouse

Mark 7:31-37

I was reading a sermon about this text – Mk 7:31-37 – and it was about how this deaf-mute man was trapped, unable to hear what was going on around him and unable to communicate to others. What Jesus does is free him from his impediment.

From the text there is little indication as to how deaf the man was and how severe his speech impediment.

It does appear, however, that it was other people who brought him to Jesus. Did the man consider himself to be in need of healing? I presume they did not force him. He had probably indicated that he wanted to see Jesus. Or maybe he indicated that they should all see Jesus.


When they get there, all they ask is for Jesus to place his hands on the man.

So, Jesus takes the deaf-mute away from his friends and the others who are gathered around. I don't think they are ready for the miracle. They only see the deaf-mute as the one with the problem.

There is something very touching in the way Jesus conducts this act of healing. In a sense, it is a form of sign language. Jesus indicates to the man what is about to happen.

Then, with eyes raised to heaven and with a sigh from the heart, Jesus simply says “Be opened” in the man's own language. Here is a deep respect for local ways of communicating. Jesus treats the deaf-mute with profound respect. It is a deeply personal experience.

And then Jesus says to the people when he brings him back, “Don't make this act of healing into some public spectacle. Treat the man with respect and recognise the fact that we are all in need of healing in one way or another.”



These are really my words and my sense of what Jesus may have said. As one who is deaf and who was helped to overcome his speech impediment, I think I am entitled to my interpretation. The miracle takes place every day as I struggle to hear what people are saying and speak what I want to say trusting that those around me will understand.

My disability has never left me with a sense of being trapped. Rather, it has gifted me with a sensitivity to others, to the languages that they speak and to the stories they tell. After all, those who have good hearing often fail to listen and those gifted with eloquence fail to pass on the message. We are indeed all in need of healing.

Celebration of the Mass ***Te Whakanui i te Miha***

Social Justice Week Sunday – 9th September 2018

Please make use of the following options and adapt them as necessary for your local parish context.

Welcome: Suggested text that the person welcoming people to Mass may wish to use:

Today marks the beginning of Social Justice Week. This year the theme is Enabling Communities: Everyone has a part to play. The goal is to encourage the Church as the Body of Christ to encounter and embrace disability awareness. This unique opportunity invites us to celebrate the gifts and strengths of each and every member of our community in our diversity, and challenges us to create a more welcoming and inclusive community.

Prayer of the Faithful: Suggested intentions – choose one of the following patterns then write further intentions to reflect the needs of yourself, neighbour or community to be inclusive. You

may wish to have these prayers spoken in the different languages of your community, with an English translation available on a PowerPoint.

For the enrichment of our faith communities: that we will cherish those among us who, through their lives with disability, offer us unique insights into life in our country and faith in our Lord.

For a greater awareness of the consequences of poor legislation in our country: that we strongly resist moves to reject human life seen as either inconvenient or of having little use.

For a deepened respect for the human person: that we will come to know our neighbour for whom they are and not just for what they do.

For those among us who have the capacity to employ or work alongside people with disabilities: that we will be open to the benefits of doing so for that person and for our workplaces.

For ourselves: that by walking with others facing particular challenges in their lives, we will see the face of God and come to know more deeply that we are in the presence of Christ.

For those we have known who struggle with disability due to the lack of support, compassion and foresight of others: that through our words and actions, they will know Christ now and in eternal life.

For those who, through a serene acceptance of disability in their lives, have answered God's call to holiness and helped us to do so.

(Ken Joblin, Catholic Diocese of Christchurch)

OR

For the Church, that we may rise to the challenge of the Gospel to see justice done for all;

For access, inclusion, and social connection where there is disconnection in our neighbourhoods;

For ourselves, that we may strive harder to create welcoming communities where people from all walks of life can find belonging;

For all people living with disability, that they/we experience a welcoming community where they feel valued and where they have equal access to our church.

OR

For the people of Aotearoa New Zealand, that all individuals' contributions and gifts would be recognised, as all have something valuable to offer.

For those in our midst who feel lonely, isolated and misunderstood. May the Lord come close to them, and may we be equipped to be the Lord's hands, eyes and feet of welcome and true good news for them.

For those in our midst who live with an experience of disability. May we go beyond inclusion to true belonging and friendship in our churches, homes, schools and places of work and recreation.

For our eyes to see and our ears to hear what God is doing all around us. May we learn to recognise "teachers" in those the world tends to cast aside.

(Candice Wilson, L'Arche Community, Kāpiti)

Choose a short, familiar call and response -

E te Ariki: Whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou

OR

We pray to the Lord: Lord hear our prayer

OR

Let us pray to the Lord: Lord hear our prayer

Announcements / Notices: You may wish to use this text as a notice in your parish announcements or newsletter to highlight Social Justice Week:

As we gather after Mass today, please be mindful of the different needs and strengths of each other, and that we each have a unique part to play in this parish. Look out for ways you can enable others; and for ways that you need to be enabled. Jean Vanier said:

“Every child, every person needs to know that they are a source of joy; every child, every person, needs to be celebrated. Only when all of our weaknesses are accepted as part of our humanity can our negative, broken self-images be transformed.”

So, let us celebrate our individual lives and our life as a community, while always being mindful of those on the edges, who may be waiting for an invitation to belong or to participate in ways we do not expect.



Julie O'Hara, L'Arche Community, Kāpiti



Liturgy of the Word with Children

Ko te Ritenga o te Kupu tahi me ngā Tamariki

Introduction

In 2018, our theme for Social Justice Week is **Enabling Communities: Everyone has a part to play**. We remember that we are each a gift from God, equally loved and valued by Him, and each with special gifts to give – so that our whole community will be better off.

It's important to remember that we each need to look after and help each other, especially those of us who need a little extra help to belong and take part in the things we might take for granted.

Gospel: In today's Gospel, Jesus heals a man who had a speech impediment and who was hearing impaired, by saying "be opened." This was a fulfilment of a prophecy from hundreds of years before: so we know from this miracle that Jesus is the promised Messiah from God.

Reflection: When Jesus tells the man to "be opened," He's not just talking to him – He's talking to all of us. Sometimes there are things in our world that make it hard for people to belong – especially for those of us who live with a disability. Sometimes it's because we can't get into a particular building, but sometimes it's because we're treated with injustice by others.

All of us may have felt excluded at some point. And all of us can do something to make sure that doesn't happen. Jesus encourages us to "be opened" – to see where people need help, to understand that everyone needs love and belonging, and speak words of love and acceptance to those around us.

SECTION 3: SENT OUT TO THE LIGHT WĀHANGA 3: KUA TUKUNA KI TE AO MARAMA

Delving into the theme: Disability and participation

Rukuhia te kaupapa nei: Hauātanga me te mahi

The experience of those of us with disabilities has changed significantly in New Zealand in the past century. Disability was once seen as a medical problem which must be treated, cured, or at least contained¹.

Society stigmatised those of us with disabilities, seeing us as weak or less valuable. A moral distinction was made between those disabled through injury and illness and those impaired since birth.

In the Church, some of us with intellectual disabilities were excluded. It was assumed that we could not understand the Eucharist, and that we may have been an embarrassment in public.

The difficulty of labels

By focusing on a person's disability and not the person themselves, we fall for the temptation to "make distinctions between classes of people" (James 2:1). The New Zealand Disability Strategy reminds us that even the label "disability community" is a misnomer.

Every impairment is different. The "disability community" itself is characterised by a vast array of opinions, experiences and needs. Therefore, it is virtually impossible to generalise.

For example, a deaf person's experience of life is completely different to that of a person with a learning disability. Similarly, a person who

¹ <https://odi.govt.nz/home/about-disability/history-of-disability-in-new-zealand/>

loses their hearing through natural ageing may feel differently about their disability than someone who loses it in their younger years.

If we insist on identifying people by their bodily or mental function, we lose the richness of each other's unique experience and gifts.

How then, shall we deal with our human tendency towards neat and tidy classifications, even for people? We must start with the dignity of the person.

We are a valuable gift from God

Each of us is a valuable gift from God. Each of us is made in His image, and this affords us a dignity that no-one can take away. We are all equal in our dignity, our brokenness, and our need for God. It is our faith that has levelled the playing field: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

Yet the realities of our lives differ. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church says it this way: "The human person, must always be understood in his unrepeatable and inviolable uniqueness" (131), emphasising that our personhood is sacrosanct, and not elevated or deflated by our capacity relative to another.

In our unique realities, we are each gifted differently. We each make a singularly beautiful offering to our world. Likewise, we each journey through life with our own struggles – our own disabilities, as it were.

Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche communities in which residents with developmental disabilities live alongside those without, believes that "highlighting the universality and centrality of our shared fragility has the potential to unite us in commonality" (jean-vanier.org).

He is highlighting that every one of us is broken or fragile in some way. Sharing such characteristics unlocks a freedom to love and be loved: "We no longer have to prove our worth; we are free to be ourselves. We find a new wholeness, a new inner unity." (ibid.)

“Real disability belongs to those who assume they are not disabled.”

– Sr Anne Enright (Ministry to Persons with an Intellectual Disability and their Families, Dunedin)

When we are whole in this way, we are free to live to our strengths rather than dwell in our limitations. More recently, groups such as Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui have attempted to create words in te reo Māori that provide a different view on disability.

While there have been words describing disability in the past, Te Pou have begun using tāngata whaikaha, which means people in search of, or pursuing strength. Seen through this lens, people who experience disability are people of strength. We all need to find strength in the things that hold us back.

Extending this view, some of us with disabilities don't feel disabled at all. For example, many people who are deaf or hearing impaired enjoy being part of a distinct and vibrant Deaf culture in New Zealand, with its own official language.

There is no perceived loss – to gain hearing would be to lose culture, to lose identity.

Equal yet different, we are universally in need of God: may we hold these things in tension as we journey with our brothers and sisters with dignity and respect.

Binding together

A Māori concept aids with this process: whakawhanaungatanga – the process of finding family connections with people we meet.

More recently, this concept is applied to the process by which strangers start their interactions by finding out what common ground they share. Even if not a literal family connection, then perhaps common acquaintances or shared history.

In the Church, our common ground is our binding together as the family of God. In Christ, we are all one – He has made us sisters and brothers, adopted into His Kingdom as his children.

He has placed the different parts in the body each exactly where He wanted them. He has told the stronger parts to look after the weaker, for if one part suffers, every part suffers; and if one part is honoured, every part is honoured (1 Cor 12:18, 26).

Interestingly, whakawhanaungatanga can serve as a translation of the word solidarity. Sometimes, solidarity is translated as kotahitanga (unity, or oneness).

But to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters is to understand life from their perspective. Thus, whakawhanaungatanga gives us oneness through bonds of relationship, bonds of belonging.

Towards true participation

A principle of Catholic social teaching is participation – the call from God for each of us to play our part in our local and global communities.


But for participation to be truly inclusive, we need to help our brothers and sisters to play their parts too. Pope John Paul II wrote in his encyclical “Laborem Exercens:”

“Since persons with disabilities are subjects with all their rights, they are to be helped to participate in every dimension of family and social life at every level accessible to them and according to their possibilities” (para 634).

This goes beyond accessible entrance ways, sign language interpretation and large print newsletters. It goes to a place where every person – disabled or not – is made to feel welcome and has every opportunity to truly belong.

Belonging is an essential part of playing our part, and living the abundant life that Jesus promised us. St Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

“He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love” (Eph 4:16, NLT).



What might it look like for the body of Christ to be healthy? What might it look like if we truly lived into our calling to be fitted together perfectly? Is it sufficient for each of us, as individuals, to go about our own “special work,” in isolation of each other?

Optimum health for the body of Christ does not mean a lack of sickness, it means that each part – each person – is able to participate in “every dimension of family and social life, at every level accessible to them, according to their possibilities.”

As the Book of James (chapter 2, verses 1-5) challenges us, we must not apply different standards, but we must open our eyes and ears to the obstacles and prejudices in our society that hold people back, and we must see to it that they are removed.

“We only grow humanly and spiritually together dealing with the lovely and the difficult together. It’s just part of life’s journey.”

– Sr Anne Enright

What is disability?

According to the New Zealand Disability Strategy, a person is considered disabled when they have: “long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

However, “disability” is not defined in the Strategy as the impairment that the person lives with. It is defined as the range of barriers in society and in our environment that prevent us from full and effective participation.

This clearly relieves those of us with disabilities from the burden of labels. It also places an onus on society to acknowledge and remove obstacles.

Such obstacles might be physical, such as the lack of access for wheelchair users or the absence of pedestrian facilities for the vision impaired. Or they might be attitudinal, such as



Wellington Catholic Deaf Community, Ss Peter & Paul's Church

discrimination, lack of understanding, or at worst, violent or degrading behaviour towards those of us with disabilities.

The Strategy sets out a vision for our nation to be a “non-disabling society – a place where disabled people have an equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations, and all of New Zealand works together to make this happen.”


“Disability happens when the world is designed by people who assume that everyone is the same.”

– New Zealand Disability Strategy

Is New Zealand a disabling society?

Aotearoa New Zealand is considered a world leader in improving the lives of those of us with disabilities.

In 2008, then Governor General Sir Anand Satyanand received on the nation's behalf the Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award at a special United Nations ceremony in New York. Sir Anand was recognised for our country's efforts to promote the rights of disabled people.



These efforts included the establishment of the Office for Disability Issues, the Government's role in UN negotiations on disability issues, and the implementation of a disability strategy in 2000, then revised in 2016. This strategy sets out a vision for New Zealand to be a non-disabling society.

In 2012, the Government began trialling a new approach, called Enabling Good Lives, to provide greater choice and control to disabled people over the support we receive, so that we can plan for the lives we want (www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz).


Despite the progress being made, there are still many barriers to those of us with disabilities reaching our full potential. Then Minister for Disability Issues, Hon. Nicky Wagner, said in the 2016-2026 Disability Strategy: "If these barriers are not dismantled and removed, then all of us miss out. We will not prosper if disabled people are not able to participate in and contribute to our communities on an equal basis with others."

In 2013, over 1 million New Zealanders identified as being disabled. Disabled people are more than twice as likely as non-disabled people to be unemployed, and those who are employed live with average weekly incomes around half that of non-disabled Kiwis.

Hourly wage rates are lower for disabled compared to non-disabled. In a 2008 study into disability and discrimination commissioned by the Human Rights Commission, nearly half (48%) of all respondents with a disability which hinders their ability to get or keep a job said they felt they had been discriminated against in the previous 12 months.

With lower incomes, it is hardly surprising that finding affordable and quality housing is doubly challenging for those of us with disabilities in an already challenging market.

According to the New Zealand Disability Survey conducted in 2013, nearly half of all disabled Māori and Pacific Islanders (43%



and 49% respectively) live in the most deprived areas of New Zealand, compared with lower percentages of disabled Kiwis from European, Asian or other ethnic backgrounds.

Likewise, Māori and Pacific Islanders are more likely than other ethnicities to struggle to keep their homes warm and dry, and those amongst those communities with disabilities even more so.

Even for those with disabilities who can afford it, brand new homes are not guaranteed to be accessible. A story emerged from Christchurch in 2016 in which it was revealed that just two percent of the city's new housing stock was likely to cater for people with mobility or disability issues.

This, given that nationwide, 14% of the total population live with a physical impairment, a third of whom need building modifications to improve access.

The definition of disability includes mental and psychological impairments. Mental distress is common in New Zealand, however not all people who experience distress find it disabling.

According to the 2013 Disability Survey, an estimated 242,000 people, or 5% of New Zealanders, are living with disability caused by psychological and/or psychiatric conditions which limit their daily activities. For an estimated 122,000 people, psychological or psychiatric disability is their only impairment, or their most limiting one.

Research shows that social exclusion is strongly connected to experience of mental distress, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity – and that they have a cyclical relationship. In other words, people who feel more isolated are more likely to experience mental distress, and people who experience mental distress are more likely to feel isolated.

Research also suggests interventions that produce a strong sense of connectedness and belonging have a positive effect on mental

health, and could be preventative of depression, and reduce suicide risk.

It appears that everyone has a part to play in improving the mental health of our whānau, friends, colleagues and neighbours.

“Prior to 1988, I became very aware that people who were named disabled generally were unseen in our Catholic churches, even if family members were active participants.... I think what I remember from those early days was the pain of the families when their disabled member was not welcome.”

– Sr Anne Enright

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church reminds us: “Only through the mutual action of individuals and peoples sincerely concerned for the good of all men and women can a genuine universal brotherhood be attained [286]; otherwise, the persistence of conditions of serious disparity and inequality will make us all poorer.” (145)

So, what can the church do?

Immanuel Koks, a Laidlaw College theology lecturer who lives with Cerebral Palsy, talks about ministry in the context of the “theology of mess.”

In the context of 1 Corinthians 12:13-14, which tells us that we are all different parts of the body, Koks reminds us that the church is a community of the personal presence of the Holy Spirit; He is deeply connected to each of us, where we are.

As much as the Holy Spirit will work with us individually, Koks says that you can’t separate the work of the Holy Spirit with the individual from His work in the community. “The church cannot, if it’s a thriving church, be a place of uniformity,” Koks says, emphasising what St Paul said in 1 Corinthians: that we must rise above our struggle with each other, because the church needs even the weakest and least honoured members.

“The only way for Paul to do this is to say to put on love. And love in that context is hard work. It’s patient, when the last thing you want to do is to be patient. It’s kind, when all you want to do is leave that person to their problems and not sit with them.”

Love is foundational for our bonding together, for our full participation in this abundant life, and for us to eliminate barriers so that others may do the same.

As Koks says, ministry is messy, but it can and should also be ordered.

“Good ministry of difference, ministry of diversity, can and should be well-designed ministry, well thought-out ministry where you’re thinking about what will happen when you include that person. It’s about thinking about where does this gift fit in the whole? So it’s ordered, but not stifling, and that’s a wrestle.”

Social Justice Week actions

He whakaaro hei mahi mō te Wiki o te Whai Tika

We offer here some resources and ideas for groups wishing to take tangible action during and after Social Justice Week to enable community in your local context.

Hold a movie night

Watch videos from Elevate Christian Trust on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/daAWBZWx5g0> or, “Attitude” on TVNZ On Demand at: <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/attitude>.

Discuss with attendees:

- What might God be saying through the videos?
- What actions can be taken, or what attitudes need to change in order to enable more participation in your community?
- What other videos or audio/visual resources would you recommend?

Hold a parish meeting

Make sure everyone in your parish is invited, disabled and non-disabled. Have an open conversation about what barriers there are in your community, and what your parish might be able to do to remove these barriers.

Reflect on the following:

- What did I learn?
- What part do I play in creating or dismantling barriers?
- How can the community grow?

Getting to know each other

If you live without disability, introduce yourself to someone in your neighbourhood who lives with disability and find out more about them. You could invite them to lunch – perhaps at your house, or if accessibility needs prevent this, at a mutually accessible location.

Sharing stories

Invite a representative from a local disability support group or a parishioner with a disability to share at church one Sunday.

For more suggestions on engaging with your parish or community, visit our website at: www.caritas.org.nz/parishes/social-justice-week

Principles of Catholic social teaching ***Ngā mātāpono ākoranga Katorika***

Human dignity – Made in God’s image

Each of us is made in God’s image, which means every person has an innate human dignity – te tapu o te tangata – no one can take away.

Solidarity – Walking together

Being in solidarity with others is recognising them as our brothers and sisters, and actively working with them for their good. In our connected humanity, we are invited to build relationships – whakawhanaungatanga – to understand what life is like for others who are different from us.

Preferential option for the poor and vulnerable – Protecting those in need

Having a preferential option for the poor – he whakaaro nui mō te hunga rawakore – compels us to think first of the needs of those who are most vulnerable.

Common good – The good of each and all

Commitment to the common good means working for the good of all – he painga mō te katoa. This means respecting the rights and responsibilities of all people.

Subsidiarity – Empowering communities

Taking account of subsidiarity – mana whakahaere – means ensuring decision making happens at the most appropriate level, so all those affected can contribute.

Stewardship – Being responsible guardians

We are kaitiaki – guardians of the earth. Exercising stewardship is caring for the gifts that God has given us, including the environment, our own personal talents and other resources.

Participation – Everyone with a part to play

Promoting participation – nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou – means recognising we each have something unique and important to contribute to society. We are called to be active members of our local and global communities.

For more information Caritas and Catholic social teaching, go to:

www.caritas.org.nz/catholic-social-teaching

“...our communities still find it hard to exercise a true inclusion, a full participation that may at last become ordinary, normal. It calls for not only specific techniques and programmes, but it requires first of all that each face be recognised and accepted, with the tenacious and patient certainty that every person is unique and unrepeatabe, and that every excluded face is an impoverishment of the community.”

Pope Francis,
Address at the Convention for
Persons with Disabilities, 2016

**Ehara taku toa i te
toa takitahi,
engari he toa takitini**

My achievements and
strengths are not those
of the individual, but
those of the many.



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