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### To Act Justly

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# To Act Justly

The United Nations, an international organization that has the responsibility of ensuring international cooperation among the nations of the world, has always espoused the practice of social justice.



▲ Elvin S. Gabriel

The Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations emphasized that this type of justice is a “reaffirmation of faith in fundamental rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of men and women.”<sup>1</sup>

The Holy Bible makes social justice a mandate of faith and a fundamental expression of Christian discipleship. It is at the heart of the biblical message and tradition, and a way of life and a Divine human imperative that demands a response in the wake of suffering of the entire planet.<sup>2</sup> In Bible phraseology, the terms “righteousness” and “justice” are inextricably linked. To be righteous is to “do justice, that is, to bring harmony and well-being in all one’s relationships, both individual and communal, and especially by defending the oppressed.”<sup>3</sup>

Christ embodied the tenets of social justice during His sojourn on earth, by (1) fighting for the freedom and dignity of the woman caught in adultery (John 8: 1-11, NIV); (2) condemning the scribes and Pharisees for their stance on social, moral and religious issues (Matthew 2:13-36, NIV); and (3) driving the money-changers from the Temple who were turning it into a market (John 2: 13-17, NIV). God’s emotional engagement with the cause of justice and His punishment for its violation are fundamental to our own involvement in issues of justice.<sup>4</sup>

The Christian family can be a powerful force in the fight for the rights of those among us who are continually bearing the burdens of oppression, injustice and inequality. It must become *a voice for those who have no voice*. The Bible encourages us to *speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute* (Proverbs 31:8 (NIV)).

In that light, parents should have a sacred obligation to expose their children to social action through faith- and community-based civic engagement projects which are within their capabilities. They should ensure that decisions on social action involvement are family decisions. This means discussing with them in planning and evaluating the activities, and asking them to identify the roles or functions with which they are most comfortable.<sup>5</sup> One of the rewards for this kind of involvement is the deep fellowship that comes from working with others for change. Children’s vision of life and their role in it is broadened.<sup>6</sup>

Christ has provided us, as Christians, with the most comprehensive relational model of social justice that is designed to transform and heal fragmented relationships among peoples of this earth. It is only as this model is integrated into our personal, parental, professional and spiritual roles and functions that the Divine mandate for social justice will be realized. ■

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