



There are stark differences between charity and justice, although both are equally necessary and each addresses inequality. The objective of charity is to service a visible need—to stem the tide. The objective of justice is to determine the root cause of a problem and modify or eliminate it to change the status quo. The link between the two is **REFLECTION**:

Charity	Justice
Social Service	Social Change
Private/individual acts	Public action
Meets immediate need	Meets long-term need
Provides direct service: food, clothing, shelter	Promotes institutional social change
Requires repeat action	Resolves structural injustice
Aimed at the symptoms of injustice:	Aimed at the root causes of injustice:
Examples: Homeless shelters, food pantries, clothing drives, emergency services	Examples: Legislative advocacy, changing corporate policy & practices, parish-based organization

Our culture would have us believe that the wealthy will always be in a position of giving while the poor will always be in a position of receiving. Yet, if we do nothing to change the imbalance of power, the contribution the poor can make to society is greatly diminished. Voices are quieted. Great potential is lost!

As Catholics, we are called to challenge the myth that the poor can rise above their status simply by working harder. We must give them a voice. So, as we meet the immediate need of our brothers and sisters this Christmas season, let us ask questions, reflect on answers and advocate. When donating food to the pantries, ask why so many are hungry; when writing a check to stem extreme poverty, ask why millions suffer and die needlessly; when supporting expansion of emergency shelters, ask why people can't afford permanent housing.

We are blessed with charitable people and organizations that respond to crisis. As we receive their gifts, let us also take time to reflect and lessen their burden as Christ lessened ours.

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Next Social Justice Mtg.: Thurs.12/14/06; 7:30-9:30, Rm. 227