

## November 4 – Building your Toolbox of Justice

At the first session of our workshop series, Building your Toolbox of Justice, Fr. Fred Kammer, S.J. spoke with us about the biblical foundation of justice.

Our talk began... at the beginning, with the book of Genesis. In the creation stories of Genesis, Fr. Kammer points out three themes: (1) the goodness of creation; (2) humans' role as co-creators and stewards of creation, both given (by God) and enhanced (by people); and (3) God's dwelling in our community as evidenced by the covenant "I will be your God, and you will be my people."

He moved on to talk with us about the web of relationships between people and God with three additional themes: (1) reverence for creation, for the people around us, and for ourselves; (2) pathos, the passion of God for us, for our community, and for the world; and (3) jubilee which in old testament communities led to freedom and restoration of right relationships within the community, including freedom from debt and forgiveness.

Fr. Kammer next shared the concept of the *Anawim*, those who cry out to God for help, which includes widows, orphans (someone who has lost a parent), strangers/sojourners, and the poor. Fr. Kammer talked of the duty owed by the covenant community to the *Anawim*. This duty is Justice. He stated "without the doing of justice, God remains unknown."

From there, Fr. Kammer walked us through the Cycle of Baal, which he called a simplification of the Old Testament and also a way to view both our nations and our lives. In the cycle, the covenant people recognize God's original blessing, then they move through the following cycle: they become owners; forget the poor; forget Yahweh; create other gods; self-destruction/exile; God sends prophets (the poor); they kill the prophets; God sends more prophets; they cry out for deliverance; there is a restoration with Yahweh.

The workshop continued with Jesus – two things Jesus says, two things Jesus does, and one image Jesus uses.

We began in Luke chapter 4 at the start of Jesus' public ministry where Jesus reads from the scroll of Isaiah in the temple, which ends with: "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:19). This is Jesus' proclamation that his life as a jubilee which will lead to restoration and forgiveness.

Next, we talked about Jesus' healing ministry. Jesus steps over the walls and goes to those on the margins who are separated from the community. He puts his hands on them and risks becoming unclean. In these acts throughout the gospels, Jesus is restoring people to the community.

We continued to the Final Judgment Scene from Matthew 25, "Lord, when did we see you hungry... Lord" and Jesus answers... when you did (or did not do) something for the least of my brothers, you did (or did not) do it for me.

Next, in John's gospel, Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. In doing so, he says "love one another as I have loved you." And, he raises the standard of love for one another.

Fr. Kammer closed with the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd knows his sheep, he calls them by name, and they know and heed his voice. Fr. Kammer stated that this message is the foundation for all our service to those in need.

During the questions and answers, we talked about the expectation that the work of charity (service) will lead people to justice (advocacy). And the principle of subsidiarity, where problems are solved at the lowest *effective* level in order to maintain dignity.

He quoted a Brazilian priest as saying “I fed the poor, they called me a saint. I asked why people are poor, they called me a communist.”

For those who want to know more, his remarks follow the first two chapters of his book *Doing Faithjustice: An Introduction to Catholic Social Thought*