

Step 5: Learn about the Two Feet of Social Action

Step 1:
Contact Your CCHD
Diocesan Director.

Step 2:
Learn about Poverty in
the U.S. and its Root
Causes.

Step 3:
Learn about Catholic
Social Teaching
Themes.

Step 4:
Get to Know a CCHD-
Funded Group.

**Step 5:
Learn about the
Two Feet of Social
Action.**

Step 6:
Create Artwork.

Step 7:
Share, Reflect and
Educate Others.

In Step 5, Students will:

- Learn why charitable works and social justice are essential but distinct responses to our faith.
- Understand that CCHD-funded groups are focused on work for justice.

I. Introductory Activity

To introduce students to charitable works and social justice, first draw a vertical line down the center of the chalkboard or dry erase board. Then ask students to name any ways over the past three months that they have been involved in “social action.” Write responses that are related to charitable works or service on the left side of the vertical line. (e.g. volunteering at a homeless shelter, donating food during a food drive, etc.) Write responses related to social justice or advocacy on the right side of the line. (e.g. writing a letter to a Congressperson about an issue) You should expect for most of the responses to fall into the first category, on the left side of the line. Now explain that in today’s lesson, we will learn about the difference between charitable works and social justice.

II. Charitable Works and Social Justice

Charitable works and social justice Study Sheet: First, ask students if they can describe to you the difference between Charitable works and social justice, which are considered the “two feet of social action.” Once students have had a chance to share ideas, pass out copies of the Excerpt from *In the Footsteps of Jesus* in **Activity Q**. The Charitable Works and Social Justice Study Sheet in **Activity R** will be useful for this activity as well.

Have students read the short article to themselves followed by the descriptions of charitable works and social justice provided on the handout. Now ask students again to comment on the difference between charitable works and social justice using the information they have just read. Expand on the students’ ideas to make sure everyone has a clear idea of the distinction between the two. Some information about this distinction is described on the following page.

Step 5 (continued)

Step 1:
Contact Your CCHD
Diocesan Director.

Step 2:
Learn about Poverty in
the U.S. and its Root
Causes.

Step 3:
Learn about Catholic
Social Teaching
Themes.

Step 4:
Get to Know a CCHD-
Funded Group.

Step 5: Learn about the Two Feet of Social Action.

Step 6:
Create Artwork.

Step 7:
Share, Reflect and
Educate Others.

Charitable Works:

- Focuses on the *needs* of individuals, families and all creation.
- Looks at individual situations.
- Meets immediate needs.
- Addresses painful symptoms of social problems.
- Relies on the generosity of donors.

Social Justice:

- Focuses on the *rights* of individuals, families and all creation.
- Works for long-term social change.
- Addresses underlying social causes of individual problems.
- Relies on just laws and fair social structures.
- Analyzes social situations and structures.



A society is “just” when systems, structures, and individuals in all dimensions of human life promote the common good and the good of all sectors of society. While there can be relative differences in wealth, the differences cannot be such to deprive those who are poor of the basics needed for a decent life.

In listening to the voices of those who are poor, we hear that they often want us to work with them to change things so that they can live decently, that they want to be part of society, not simply the object of our giving, and that they do not want to feel left out.

A. Charitable works and social justice activity (continued):

Following the discussion, ask students to complete, in small groups, the section of the study sheet (from **Activity R**) about possible responses to Education, Homelessness, and Hunger. Now, ask students to consider whether the activities of the CCHD-funded group(s) they learned about fall into the Charitable Works or Social Justice categories. What were the issues of concern to these groups? What responses did they engage in that involved Charitable Works? Social Justice?

Step 5 (continued)

Step 1:
Contact Your CCHD
Diocesan Director.

Step 2:
Learn about Poverty in
the U.S. and its Root
Causes.

Step 3:
Learn about Catholic
Social Teaching
Themes.

Step 4:
Get to Know a CCHD-
Funded Group.

**Step 5:
Learn about the
Two Feet of Social
Action.**

Step 6:
Create Artwork.

Step 7:
Share, Reflect and
Educate Others.

B. *Two Feet of Social Action*

Based on their new understanding, ask students to now complete the worksheet located in **Activity S**, in which students brainstorm ideas about how they can participate in both Charitable works and social justice. A teacher's key is also provided which has additional ideas on appropriate responses to fill each shoe.



III. Summary:

Charitable works and social justice are both very important responses to our faith, but are quite distinct. While *charitable works* provide direct social services that help individuals meet their immediate needs, *social justice* involves working for systemic social change in communities.

Discussion questions are provided below for further reflection:

Discussion Questions:

- How are charitable works and social justice distinct?
- Why are both responses important? Why is “something missing” if either of the two responses is lacking?
- Does the CCHD-funded group with which you interacted address charitable works, social justice or both in its work?
- Are you more comfortable with participating in charitable works or efforts for social justice? Why? What can you do to strengthen the “foot” of social action that for you, personally, is weaker?

Activity Q: Excerpt from *In the Footsteps of Jesus*

Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus

The following text is excerpted from *In the Footsteps of Jesus: Resource Manual on Catholic Social Teaching*:

There are a number of ways we can walk in the footsteps of Jesus today. We can help in a soup kitchen, visit someone in prison, or help resettle a refugee family. We can contact legislators, work for peace, or support a local community organization that empowers low-income people to address issues that impact them. These examples illustrate two distinct yet complementary ways to put Catholic social teaching into practice: charitable works and social justice. These two types of responses have been called the two “feet” of Christian service. We need both feet—charitable works and social justice—to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

Catholic social teaching calls us to both charitable works and social justice. Charitable works meet the immediate needs of persons and families; but charitable works alone do not change social structures that attack human dignity, oppress people, and contribute to poverty. Pursuing social justice helps us change oppressive social structures; but we cannot ignore the urgent needs of persons while we work for social change. Charitable works and social justice are incomplete without each other; they are two sides of the same coin.

Charitable works call forth a generous response from individuals; social justice requires concerted communal action to transform institutional policies, societal laws, or unjust social situations. With our emphasis on individualism, we Americans tend to emphasize charitable works over social justice. The challenge for Catholics is to appreciate the demands of both charitable works and social justice.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana—USCCB, 2000, 2nd ed.) reinforces the important distinction between charitable works and social justice. “The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity” (no. 2446).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also speaks of both personal and social sin. The “sin of the world” can “also refer to the negative influence exerted on people by communal situations and social structures that are the fruit of men’s sins” (no. 408). “Sins give rise to social situations and institutions that are contrary to the divine goodness. ‘Structures of sin’ are the . . . effect of personal sins. They lead their victims to do evil in their turn. In an analogous sense, they constitute a ‘social sin’” (no. 1869).

The reality of “social sin,” which is imbedded in social structures, institutions, and laws, requires more of us than individual acts of charity; it requires works of justice. Abortion, racism, discrimination, sexism, genocide, ecological devastation, violence, pornography, and excessive economic inequality are all examples of social sin—structures of sin that also demand action for social justice.

In the Footsteps of Jesus: Resource Manual on Catholic Social Teaching can be ordered in its entirety at:
<http://www.usccbpublishing.org/productdetails.cfm?sku=5-499>

Activity R: Charitable Works and Social Justice

Study Sheet

The following charts compare and contrast charitable works and social justice.

Charitable Works and Social Justice

Use the top sections of this table to reflect on how charitable works and social justice are both necessary but distinct responses to social injustices. How do they differ? Finally, write down some possible ways to work on the issue of hunger, homelessness, and unemployment. In the first column, limit yourself to charitable works; in the second column limit yourself to acts of social justice.

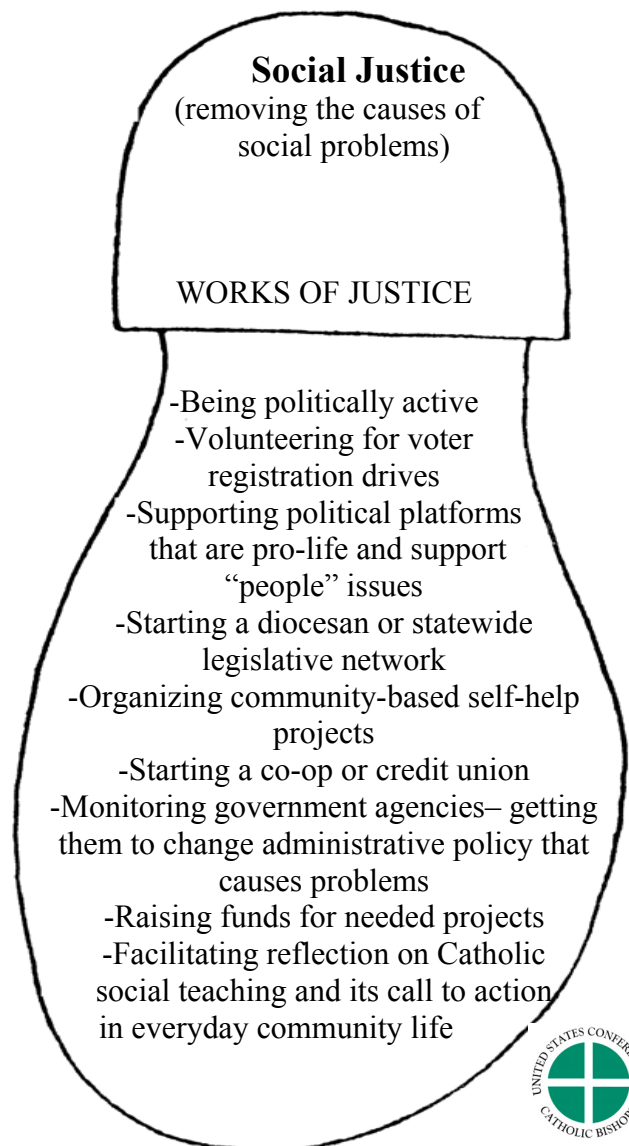
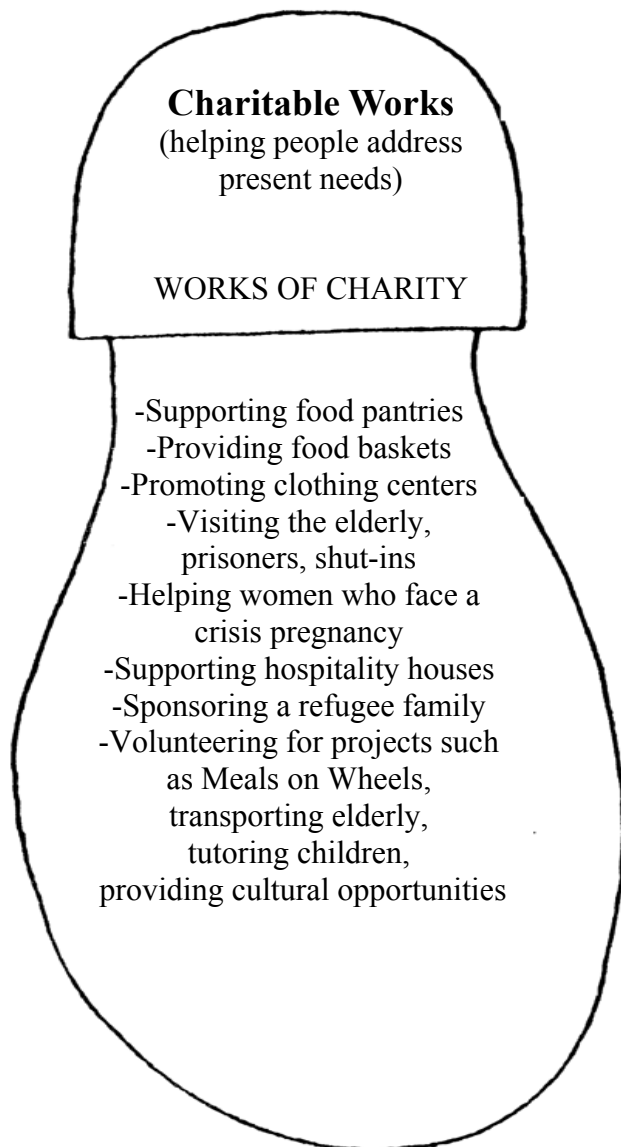
	Charitable Works	Social Justice
General Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focuses on the needs of individuals, families and all creation. - Looks at individual situations. - Meets and immediate need. - Addresses painful individual symptoms of social problems. - Relies on the generosity of donors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focuses on the rights of individuals, families and all creation. - Analyzes social situations or social structures. - Works for long-term social change. - Addresses the underlying social causes of individual problems. - Relies on just laws and fair social structures.
Responses to Abortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give women alternatives to abortion, including adoption. - Provide prenatal care and medical services for poor women. - Offer crisis pregnancy services, especially to unwed mothers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extend legal protection to unborn children. - Reform health care systems to make medical care accessible to all. - Adopt pro-family public policies that help families with children.
Responses to Homelessness		
Responses to Hunger		
Responses to Unemployment		

Source: *Leader's Guide to Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000.
 Order the entire resource at: <http://www.usccbpublishing.org/productdetails.cfm?sku=5-366>

Activity S: The Two Feet of Social Action

The various ways we can respond to the poverty we face in our society have been summarized by CCHD as “The Two Feet of Social Action.” The left foot is charitable works, helping people survive their present crisis. When we lead with this foot we are providing food, clothing, shelter, and transportation for the elderly; sponsoring an immigrant family; helping to pay rent or other necessities; or helping people get access to public resources.

The right foot is social justice/systemic change, working to remove the causes of the problems. When we lead with this foot we are working with people who are poor to secure decent jobs, organizing with them to be effective in the political arena or in getting businesses to treat them fairly, helping with voter registration drives, and getting government agencies to change policies that impede people who are poor from achieving their fair participation in government protections and assistance.



Activity S: The Two Feet of Social Action Student Worksheet

In each shoe, first write what you are already doing/have done to take action in the specified manner. Then write ideas for what more you can do to walk with this foot of social action in the future.

Charitable Works

Help individuals meet their present needs:

Social Justice

Correct long-term problems in communities: