







St. John Paul II reminds us that the Eucharist must lead us to solidarity with the world of pain and hurt. He said, “[W]e must recognize Christ in the poorest and the most marginalized, those whom the Eucharist – which is communion in the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us – commits us to serve. As the parable of the rich man, who will remain forever without a name, and the poor man called Lazarus clearly shows, ‘in the stark contrast between the insensitive rich man and the poor in need of everything, God is on the latter’s side.’ We too must be on this same side” (Message for the World Day of Peace 1999, no. 13). Solidarity, as John Paul once said, is another word for justice in our day. It is “a firm and preserving determination to commit oneself to the common good” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 38).

As Catholics, we must be involved in the issues concerning the life and dignity of the human person. We work to end abortion, we oppose the death penalty, we promote human rights, racial justice, we are concerned for the poor, the immigrant, the abandoned elderly. These pursuits certainly are not contrary to the Spirit of the Liturgy, they are not opposed to the ultimate spiritual and transcendent destiny of the human person. Our involvement in these issues presupposes this destiny and is ultimately orientated to this end. If this earth is our only highway to heaven, then we must seek to maintain it, and to make sure to the best of our abilities that this highway is cleared of the obstacles which sin, both personal and structural, has placed in the path of those traveling on it. To go back to the parable of Lazarus the Pope referred to in the quote above: the rich man was condemned not for anything he did (though certainly one can go to hell for doing bad things) but for what he did not do. A faith without works – without concrete engagement with the least of our brethren – is dead.

The Eucharist reminds us that our commitment as Catholics to work for peace and justice in the world is not born of some ideology or political platform; rather, it is born of a person, Jesus Christ. And therefore, our “solidarity” with the world of pain is a call to a commitment expressed in allegiance not to lofty propositions but to concrete persons in whom we are to see the face of Christ. This solidarity is lived out through the practice of what the Catechism calls the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. God takes the side of the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized; through the works of mercy, we take their side too. Jesus’ words of the Great Commission are addressed to all of us: “Go to all nations and teach them the good news...”