

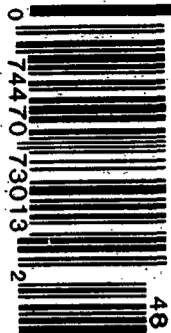
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Catholic Courier

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U.S. bishops renew call to living lives of justice

Do you walk out of Sunday Mass feeling you have just fulfilled your weekly obligation as a Catholic? In reality that obligation has just begun, this country's bishops are reminding us.

The bishops unanimously adopted a 3,000-word statement, "Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice," Nov. 17 during their fall meeting in Washington, D.C. Also approved was a "Jubilee Pledge for Charity, Justice and Peace" (see Page 10). Parishioners across the country will be asked to take the pledge in preparation for the millennium celebration.

"We renew the warning of the Second Vatican Council that the split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age," stated the document, which was developed by the bishops' committees on the laity, international policy and domestic policy.

"Many people think if they go to church every Sunday and be moral, kind and courteous, that they fulfill their basic Christian obligation — that that's enough. But the bishops are saying there's more," remarked Vaile Scott, president of the Chicago-based National Center for the Laity.

Scarlett Emerson described this trend as "what we're called to do, as opposed to what we do."

"The bishops have caught it. We go to church, and we say all those wonderful things — and when we go out in the world, it's not as easy," remarked Emerson, parish and community development coordinator for Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes.

"The bishops' message is simply this: It's not enough to feel sympathy for the poor, or pray that conditions will improve," said Tim McMahon, executive director of Catholic Charities of Livingston County.

Indeed, the document probes into the far-reaching aspects of our faith in everyday life, saying that "social justice and the common good are built up or torn down day by day in the countless decisions and choices we make."

"How do we connect worship on Sunday to work on Monday?" it asks. "How is the Gospel proclaimed not only in the pulpits of our parishes, but also in the everyday lives of Catholic people? How does the church gathered on the Sabbath act as the people of God scattered and active every day of the week? How can we best carry the values of our faith into family life, the market place and the public square? How do we love our neighbor, pursue peace and seek justice in everyday choices and commitments?"

McMahon said that these morally challenging questions will hopefully snap many Catholics into action.

"I applaud the bishops' taking this kind of position. It's not going to be popular with those who are more comfortable with a less active way of living our faith," McMahon said. "The old saying goes, 'Christ came not only to comfort the afflicted, but to afflict the comfortable.'"



STORY BY MIKE LATONA • ILLUSTRATION BY LINDA JEANNE RIVERS

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