

SIGNS OF THE TIMES: SCRIPT

“The Pharisees and Sadducees came and, to test him, asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He said to them in reply ... You know how to judge the appearance of the sky, but you cannot judge the signs of the times.”

Matthew 16:1-3

We believe as Catholics that God is actively at work in our lives and throughout all time. God is at work redeeming humanity and inviting all of us to participate in the work of salvation. Understanding that work of redemption and being aware of God’s invitation to join in that process are known as “reading the signs of the times.”

“The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other.” Gaudium et Spes, Vatican II Document, 1965, #4

In order to read the “signs” in contemporary culture, we need to integrate a process of observing the problems or challenges in society and judging the moral impact in light of the teachings of the Church based on Gospel values and then take the right action.

The core principles that form the Catholic moral vision are: the sanctity of life, the dignity of the human person, the rights and corresponding duties, known together as “human rights” which include the right to life and to those conditions that are necessary for the development of the human development and the ability to live a life in conformity with human dignity; including the right to work and earn a living wage, acceptable working conditions, the right to organize, the right to adequate shelter, food, health care and education.

Catholic moral vision includes working to pass just laws or social policies through advocacy efforts where injustice exists.

“...the church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ Himself under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served. To carry out such a task, the church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the ‘signs of the times’ and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel” (Gaudium et Spes, no. 3 and 4).

The “signs of the times,” then, embody and reflect the movement of the Holy Spirit in human history working to bring about the redemption of people and creating the fuller realization of the Reign of God. Interpreting the “signs of the times” requires prayerful discernment, dialogue with all people of good will and a common collective action, or advocacy, to make just social change.

We do this most effectively through our cooperation with the Holy Spirit in the unifying act of the Eucharist which gives strength and purpose to our prophetic voice.

“Participation in the Eucharist ... is the expression par excellence of God's love, it calls us to join forces with all our brothers and sisters to confront today's challenges and make the earth a place that is pleasant to live in.” (Homily for the Closing of the 49th International Eucharistic Congress, Pope Benedict XVI)

Some concrete examples of “the signs” today that violate human dignity include: the sexual exploitation of youth by advertising and media, the various aspects of diminishing respect for the dignity of the human person in our society, the fear-based intolerance of people and the injustice of our immigration system, threats of terrorism and war, human trafficking and sweatshops, pornography, a dehumanized reproductive technology industry, embryonic research, surrogacy, growing rates of poverty (especially among children) and the use of technology to create and destroy human life. Amidst the signs of the times, we are called to be a sign of God’s light and love. As a people of faith, we are asked to live and teach the Light of Christ toward goodness, righteousness and truth.