

# **RIGHTS AND JUSTICE FOR THE WEAK AND AFFLICTED**

ENCYCLICAL OF POPE IVY S. ALCANTARA

ON THE ISSUES OF THE RIGHTS AND JUSTICE THAT PEOPLE DESERVED

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Good day to all people who's part and involved to my encyclical letter, that you can surely get learnings and understand what I wanted to addressed about this social issues of having the right and justice of the weak and afflicted people. Hoping for your take time to read and analyze all the contents written in my encyclical. Thank you.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

1 This encyclical letter is all about the rights and justice of every people, weak and afflicted, like discussing how people in the world especially in the Philippines who got the mistreatment that they don't deserve because of their status in life. Another information is that about the Nigerians who don't understand why a minor sin can be punished by death. It's hard for them to think that it's just a minor sin but life is the exchange of that sin. We can say that a person who committed a minor sin can be put into jail for more than a years but we can't accept that the exchange is life. I'm really thinking about what can their family feel, especially their mother, when they know that the child they take good care for 9 months in their wombs, they make a grown man or woman, can be sentenced to death for a just minor sin. Here is that the justice must needed to have the rights they deserve, just acceptingly the right punishment and not the unequal one.

2 Here in the Philippines, the weak and afflicted during pandemic, is the mistreatment of the rich and poor especially if diagnosed to the virus. If a rich person infected by the virus they can easily heal themselves because of money, they can get the best doctors and nurses that can treated them well and can surely make them feel alive again. For the poor, they have to wait, to fall in line, to find more ways to get treated, that's the inequality that some Filipinos experience in this pandemic. It's hard for me to explain the

part of me because even if I wanted to help, I just can't due to lack of ability to help them. I'm at the age of studying and all I want now is to fast forward life and having the time and ability to help them, even in a small type of help.

3 Pandemic hits different, because the world is all that's matter. Many countries suffer and I know not only the Philippines experience the mistreatment and unequal justice they have. Being rich and poor really has a big difference, not in meaning, but in for everyday life. Whatever the state we have in life, being rich or poor, I can say that our future depends on it, because being rich, having the power is much easier and you can get the justice you want, even if you deserve it or not. Life is full of challenges, good or bad, and it depends on you if you seek for what is the good, not only for yourself and your family, but for every people surrounds you.

## **SITUATION:**

### **Issues About The Weak and Afflicted**

4 There are lots of meaning about weak, like weak people who do not have the determination that is needed to continue with a difficult course of action, like mentally weak that having or showing a lot of mental firmness, or being weak or fatigue like it results from overwork, poor sleep, boredom, or lack of exercise that's like it is a symptom that may be caused by illness, medicine, or medical treatment. But here, we're talking about the weak people who do not have enough money, energy, or the power that they can use to achieve or get the justice and the rights that they deserve. Weak people who can't fight for their rights and get the proper steps to get the justice they need to have. And the law that sometimes it's hard to believe because in some cases the decision of the law is not right especially if you're poor.

5 The afflicted, which make someone or something suffer physically or mentally. Like they also don't have the power to achieve what they want to achieve in case of justice. Some people or almost all the people, if you're not rich, you suffer, especially if you commit a sin, and you're the one who's honest and clean, but you didn't get the rights and justice you deserve because of the situation of you being poor. We all know that it really happened before until now, and it's like for me, it's time to raise our voice as one

on how we can fight and get the justice we all deserve. Having those people who we know can help us and can teach us about the things that we need to know.

### **Issues About The Weak and Afflicted During Pandemic**

6 In this current situation of pandemic, we all know that all people are affected, rich or poor, but the difference is the rich one has the ability to fulfill their needs like the medical needs and their foods in everyday life even if they don't work, and the poor which is vice versa, who receives mistreatment because they don't have money to pay their bills if they got the virus, because they don't have work they don't have the ability to fulfill their needs. For the rich people today, they can easily find ways to face this pandemic because we all know that rich people has savings that they can use in case of emergency. If they got the virus, they can easily treat themselves and go to a private hospitals then if they pay for a large amount, they will be prioritized, I can this because it's my auntie's experience. For the poor people, you're not be prioritized because you don't have the money to pay, it's like you have to fall in line and wait for your turn to be treated. Like in this situation, where's the equality, the rights, the justice that every people deserve? What will happen to those poor people who doesn't have the ability to fulfill their needs in life in times of pandemic? In this case, we have to look for each other, support and have unity for each other even if you're rich or poor.

### **TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH:**

#### **The Justice and Challenges of People**

7 In this part, I have here a summary article named "Justice for the Weak (April1, 2015)", published by Vanguard Media Limited in 1984 by Mr. Sam Amuka, it's like this article is not here in the Philippines but in Nigeria, which is for me as a person, when I've read and understand the article it gives me strength to push and have this justice and rights that every people deserves. Like even a simple sin, a person who committed the sin will be sentenced to death, and many people asking why life is the substitute or the exchange of that sin is death, not just a simple sentenced to more than years in jail. It's like, they can't explain what they want, they can't voice out what they want, it's also hard for me, as a person because I can't help them even in a simple way.

8 So some information in the article, "While we preach equality of all before the law, we must admit that one of the challenges of treating all equally, is that our laws rate us differently. Yet equality in this context, though a mirage, should at least be applied from the bases of fair hearing, fair treatment of suspects, and speedy access to justice. The poor, the weak, and the voiceless – all those who have no contribution in making the law – bear the brunt of the harshness of our laws. Justice seems to tilt unfairly towards ordinary Nigerians." The relationship of this to the issues I'm talking about is that weak and afflicted Nigerians doesn't have the power to push themselves to get the rights and justice they deserve. Just like in the article, a weak and afflicted person is sentence to death because of just stealing a mobile telephone and 10,000 cash, like also for me, I agreed to Nigerians that a robbery is a simple sin or minor sin that it should not be sentenced or punished to death. What if the person didn't find a way to make his life more meaningful? What if the decision of the law to sentence him to death became real? How can he make a change for his life if the law decide for himself? We can really see here that if you don't have the power and the ability to fight for what is right, then many people will suffer.

9 Another article, is happened here in the Philippines during pandemic entitled, "The Pandemic Challenge: Reflections on the Social Justice Dynamic (November 9, 2020)" by Connie L. McNeely and Laurie A. Schintler, what I've read is that not only the Philippines but all over the world has suffered, losses their love ones and sacrifices everything that they have to fight for this virus. Here in the Philippines, stated in the article the unequal treatment for the rich and poor, it's all about a rich people who affords everything and the poor people who doesn't know what to do to make their life and love ones to have a long life. This pandemic in the Philippines impacted everyone but the sad truth is that not everyone treated equally in every aspects, like for example is the facilities of a person who got the virus, rich people who afford a luxury room for them to take a rest peacefully and got the best doctors to treat them, so how about the poor, who I've seen that some of them are in a tent, outside the hospital, sharing rooms with different people who's also infected, like we can see that if a person really have the power and the money, it's automatic that they can have what they want.

10 So some information in the article, "COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted certain individuals and groups – identified particularly by factors, such as race, class, gender, disability, age, displacement and homelessness, and migration status, among others – reflecting longstanding disparities and inequalities not only in health and health care but in society more generally. In the same vein, COVID-19 has further highlighted imbalances

in power and resource distributions relative to technology and knowledge divides, supply chain disruptions, and demographic and rural-urban disparities in health-care access and capacities and overall resources.” The relationship of this to the issues is that the weak and afflicted who diagnoses to the virus have the unequal treatment with the rich. Poor people didn’t prioritize but the rich people was, with this, we can clearly see the mistreatment happened and the prioritization of some experts because of power. As a Filipino, we have to see what is really happening and give each other time to feel treated properly and in a good way. Specially in the distribution of resources, like food, if you have the ability to share, why not, right? It’s like sharing your blessings to someone or to everyone is the best way to express your sincerity and yourself being helpful especially those who are in needs, because we all know that if you help one another, there is so much blessings that will come to you. Being treated unequal can really affect not just one family, but everyone.

11 For the Bible verse, “Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked (Psalm 82:3-4).” The way we typically act, it’s as though we take those passages to say, like the meaning of this verse is that give advice to the weak and the fatherless, and tell the afflicted that we live in a sinful world where injustice is rampant and they need to learn how to live with that, like give kind words to the weak and the needy, and tell people to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. Words can be helpful, but, when you see those in need, those who have been denied justice, mistreated, fallen on hard times, or other such things, the biblical call is not to give advice and stop there. It is to listen to what the wrongs are, and then actually do something about them.

## **ACTION:**

### **Roles and Responsibilities of People to Solve the Social Issues**

12 Passionate people everywhere are standing to support human rights and take collective action for a brighter future. Some of these rights are as severe as we’ve seen in history, like freedom from slavery and torture, and the right to free speech. Others are ones we find ourselves fighting for every day in our communities, like freedom from discrimination and the right to a fair trial. Here are some roles and responsibilities to support and protect human rights in your daily life and begin to empower people around

you and around the world, like every action, no matter how small, has the potential to make a difference:

- **Speak Up for What You Care About** – We all have something that we care deeply about, whether because of an experience we underwent, an encounter we've witnessed, or a story spoken by someone close to us. Advocacy has a huge impact in communities everywhere. Like one brave voice is enough to open up a channel for others to share their experiences and support human rights. The more awareness created around an issue, the more momentum there is for change to protect human rights.
- **Listen to Other's Stories** – There's incredible power in listening to someone's story, especially one that is vastly different from yours. With 7 billion people on one shared planet, the world is full of diverse cultures, traditions, and ways of living that are interesting to learn about. One important way we can empower survivors and people facing injustices is by honoring and respecting their stories. Working beside women refugees in our studio, we've had the pleasure to be a part of their stories.
- **Stand Up Against Discrimination** – Discrimination has a way of creeping up in places we never imagined encountering it. Yet it's there, and the most important thing each of us can do is say something, don't let it slip by, and when you see someone else stand up, stand with them. When we have each other as support, we are more empowered against injustices in the workplace or in a classroom. There are more people on this earth who help and uplift others than tear people down with words or hate. Acting together, we're powerful enough to pave a new path to equality and fairness.

### **Solutions for the Social Issues**

13 There are moments in world history when social justice issues come to the forefront of global consciousness. Society's collective lens is now sharply focused on the disparity of experience among different social groups. People are energized regarding crucial issues – LGBTQ legal protections, abuse of women, the rights of immigrants and indigenous peoples, racial discrimination and also what we discussed that is all about the rights and

fair justice of weak and afflicted. Today's educators have a unique opportunity to advocate for their students and communities, and to demand substantive change.

14 Here are some solutions that you can advance social justice, individually and through alignment with like-minded people in your community and throughout the world:

- **Examine Your Beliefs and Habits** – Many of us hold onto beliefs that we learned as children, and they can influence how we engage in social justice. Positive action toward inclusion and advocacy begins at home. Becoming a strong ally in a social justice movement requires ongoing self-reflection, learning, and openness to growth.
- **Educate Yourself About Social Justice Issues** – Navigating how to get involved can be overwhelming. The best way to start is to familiarize yourself with social justice issues you're passionate about and research what is being done about them. Whether it's hunger and food insecurity, gun violence, voting rights, or another issue, you'll gain a better understanding of an issue's current state by learning about its history.
- **Take Positive Action in Your Own Community** – You can learn about issues within your community by watching local news broadcasts, reading the newspaper, and listening to podcasts. Write letters and call your elected city and state officials regarding the issues your community faces.
- **Be Kind, Understanding, and Compassionate** – These are trying times. In dealing with our own issues, we may forget that we're all in this together. Whenever you feel stressed out around other people, consider their circumstances and what they may be dealing with. Social justice, like charity, begins at home.

## **Conclusion: My Thoughts and Encouragement to People**

15 Have you noticed how difficult it is just to get along in the world? If you're no good at all in your job, people treat you badly and eventually you will be unemployed. And if you're a little better than competent, everyone expects miracles from you, every single time. Like most of life, it's a no-win situation. And if you dare to mention it, no matter how creatively you phrase your complaints, you are shunned as a whiner. To every people, I can say that equality is not a concept, it's not something we should be striving for, because it's a necessity. Equality is like gravity, like we need it to stand on this earth as men and women. We have to have unity for the sake of every people who seeks to live in a peaceful life. Fairness does not mean everyone gets the same. Fairness means everyone gets what they need. The fairness, the equality, the right treatment that we all deserve, it's like it was the only thing we need to understand and support each other. People who are treated fairly and have equal opportunity are better able to contribute socially and economically to the community, and to enhance growth and prosperity. Growing in fairness and thinking about others leads to higher personal well-being. Being fair-minded helps us develop mutually supportive relationships with those around us. Live your life in such a way that you'll be remembered for your kindness, compassion, fairness, character, and a force for good who had much respect for life, in general.

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