



Invest time each week to  
expand your vocabulary and  
deepen your faith.

14 January 2024

## WORD OF THE WEEK

### Justice ˈjʌ-stəs

The moral fiber of a religious people that mirrors the God of Justice. More than an expression of fairness or the execution of legal judgment, biblical justice demands that we be straight, true, and righteous in our relationships with God and others.

Pronunciation: <http://tinyurl.com/Take5-justice>

### CONTEXT

**Justice** and revenge are not the same thing. As my father said, **justice** at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.

—Bernice King

Without **justice** and love, peace will always be a great illusion.

—Dom Hélder Câmara

It is impossible to struggle for civil rights, equal rights for blacks, without including whites. Because equal rights, fair play, **justice**, are like the air: we all have it, or none of us has it.

—Maya Angelou

### WHY IT MATTERS

The theme of **justice** is central to scripture. Divine law defines it and the prophets clamor for it. Matthew describes Jesus' mission with Isaiah's proclamation: "I shall place my spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the [nations]." It is impossible to be the People of God and reject the way of God. To be unconcerned with the work of **justice** is to be indifferent to the divine will and the coming Kingdom.

From *Brothers and Sisters to Us* (USCCB Pastoral Letter on Racism, 1979): Racism and economic oppression are distinct but interrelated forces which dehumanize our society. Movement toward authentic **justice** demands a simultaneous attack on both evils.

### RELATED WORDS

Racism | Eco-justice | Just War Theory

## QUESTION OF THE WEEK

### What is meant by "just war"?

Just war theory is the body of moral reasoning developed to discern when the primary bias *against* war may shift toward an obligation to protect and defend. . . . In the Early Church, pacifism preceded just war tradition. The alliance of church with state under Constantine ensured that church policy leaned toward supporting the interests of the empire. Fourth-century theologians Ambrose and Augustine developed arguments that could, under limited conditions, make war not only permissible but obligatory in the service of a victimized neighbor.

Just war theory offers eight criteria for engagement. Seven determine whether a conflict is justified, including: just cause, competent authority, last resort, comparative justice, proportionality, right intention, and probability of success. The eighth consideration is reserved for an inevitable engagement and involves right conduct in wartime. In his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis argued that "it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a 'just war.' Never again war!" Clearly, it's never enough simply to declare a cause righteous in one's own mind and issue a call to arms.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <https://tinyurl.com/QCA-just-war>

## REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY (JANUARY 15)

### A matter of head and heart

"One day we will learn that the heart can never be totally right if the head is totally wrong," the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote that in his book *Strength to Love* in 1963. He underscored the necessity of taking responsibility for the formation and lifelong education of our consciences. You have to be sure that your convictions are tied to more than your preferences, biases, and opinions!

READINGS: 1 Samuel 15:16-23; Mark 2:18-22 (311 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/011524.cfm>). "No one pours new wine into old wineskins. . . . Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins."

### FAITH IN ACTION

To be tethered to true north, reflect on scripture daily