

Charity and Justice

Below is a basic chart to help clarify the distinction between works of justice and works of charity.

Charity Social Service	Justice Social Change
Scriptural Reference: Good Samaritan Story The Gospel story does not attempt to survey the causes of highway banditry. The Samaritan provides temporary and immediate relief.	Scriptural Reference: Exodus Story Moses does not ask for food and medicine for the Jewish slave-labor force. He challenges the institutional system. Message: "Let My People Go."
Private, individual acts	Public, collective actions
Responds to immediate need	Responds to long-term need
Provides direct service: food, clothing, shelter	Promotes social change in institutions
Requires repeated actions	Resolves structural injustice
Directed at the effects of injustice: symptoms	Directed at the root causes of social injustice
Examples:	
Homeless shelters, food shelves, clothing drives, emergency services	Legislative advocacy, changing corporate policies or practices, congregation-based community organizing.

"Charity will never be true charity unless it takes justice into account ... Let no one attempt with small gifts of charity to exempt themselves from the great duties imposed by justice."

Pope Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, #49