

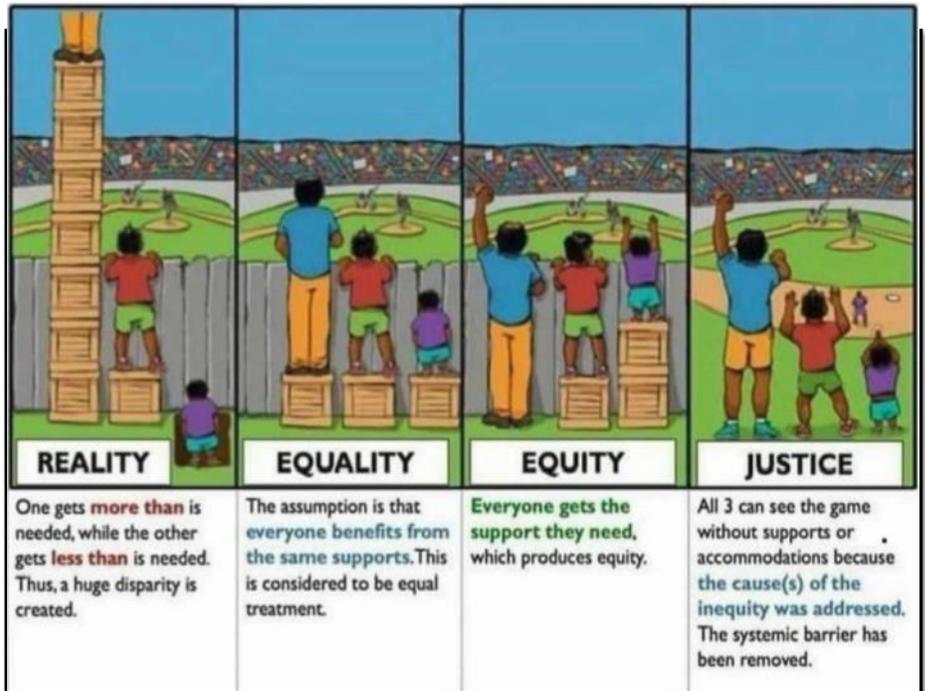
# Call to Justice: “JusticeGram” of the Salvatorian Family USA

## How to be an Ally

Sr. Patrice Colletti, SDS

Volume 2, Issue 4  
Summer 2021

For many of us, our education, training, social status, way of life, personal/social history, as well as our race/cultural background, put us into a position of privilege. We have a level of societal advantage that comes with being seen, and seeing ourselves, as the norm. Whether obvious, subtle, or totally invisible, such privilege is our reality. Set against our mandate to live and preach the Gospel, privilege calls us to a unique and powerful action: to be an ally.



What is an ally in the context of justice, peace and integrity of creation (JPIC)? In her book *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression in People*, Anne Bishop explains that allies understand themselves as part of a privileged group that has had a collective role in oppression, but that did not individually create an unjust situation.

Allies understand that goodwill and charity will not lead to structural solutions.

Allies use privilege to responsibly solve problems without taking on individual guilt. They work with others to address injustice in strategic ways. They recognize and understand their privilege and so can use it to work towards systemic change.

Bishop identifies allies as persons who:

- Are distinguished by their sense of connection with all other people;
- Understand social structures and collective responsibility and willingly grapple

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## How does one become an ally?

with historical and current complicity in injustice;

- Bring a strong sense of self, an understanding of their own process of learning, and a realistic sense of their own power;
- Embrace “power with” as an alternative to “power over;”
- Are knowledgeable about history, including perspectives beyond what might be taught/ passed on from the dominant culture;
- Know that good intentions do not matter if there is no action against injustice.

How does one become an ally? Bishop suggests beginning by learning about, reflecting

### Let Us Pray:

- ◇ For courage to build bridges of understanding among all people, for patience to accept human imperfections, and for humility to envision a world at peace,
- ◇ For our global, national and local leaders and all those who work to create public policy: that all may be willing to work together to support the common good,
- ◇ May those of us privileged as part of the majority culture feel the call to be allies of those who are oppressed,
- ◇ That we may clearly see that the advantages of some are tied to the disadvantages of others and advocate for equity.

on, and taking actions to understand patterns and effects of oppression. Ignorance is part of the oppression. Be a listener and learner, not a talker or knowitall. Don’t expect every member of the oppressed group to be ready and willing to teach us.

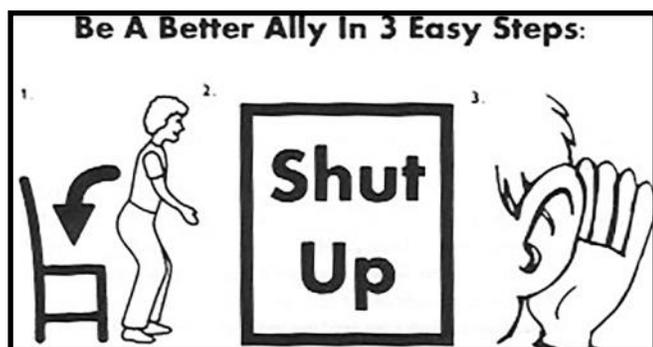
Privilege puts us in the oppressor role. Everyone in the oppressor group is part of the oppression, no matter how much learning we may have done. Resources and power continue to come to us because we are members of a dominant group, even as we seek to be allies.

This reality may make us uncomfortable but it is part of learning how to think structurally (rather than individually). It does not need to feel like we are “bad” people. We can learn to separate guilt from responsibility, accepting our share of the challenge of changing the situation. Rather than defensiveness, we can accept and name our complicity and leverage our privilege for systemic change.

Our privilege positions us to “break the invisibility of privilege” for our colleagues. We can support the process of unlearning oppression with other members of our own group. But, it’s important to avoid the trap of thinking we know what’s good for those who face oppression. We can effectively lead our colleagues, but we cannot justly take leadership among those who are facing oppression. Nor can we justly take public credit for an oppressed group’s process of liberation, or speak on their behalf.

The process of becoming an ally is not a smooth road, not a process we automatically learn. It necessitates our personal growth and

it challenges us to tolerate making mistakes, having others become angry with us, and learning to take it. It offers opportunities for action at every structural level . ☰



## Being an Ally Transforms You

**Fr. Bill Rimmel, SDS reflects on being an ally via his chaplaincy experience:**

Arizona has forty-eight State Prisons geographically grouped into 14 complexes. Each complex has several units. I work with three different teams on a regular basis, two in Florence and one in Tucson. I often help out at several other units in Tucson and on occasion at the Pinal and the Pima county jails. My role is primarily sacramental. The rest of the team provides Scripture study, RCIA, etc.

I try to help these men know the goodness and kindness of the Lord. I try to help them believe that while they did bad things, they themselves are not bad. They remain God's child, made in God's image and likeness. That will never change. But with that knowledge, they will.

In reconciliation I do all that I can to help them to understand that whatever they did to be sentenced to prison, does not make them bad unlovable people, only God's child who did a bad thing. God never has and never will stop loving them unconditionally. In the tears that flow with nearly every absolution assures me of their desire to be the person God created them to be.

Celebrating Mass is always pure joy. In a couple of units we have music provided by their praise band. Their music always lifts our hearts. And, of course, welcoming new members through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation fill the whole room with joy.

Obviously I don't work with the entire prison population, only those who want to deepen their relationship with the Lord. They are all men who daily pray, read the Scriptures and try to treat those around them with real Christian love. Many inspire and minister to me as much as I do to them. ☰



## More Resources?

**10 Things Allies Can Do** <https://tinyurl.com/EquityAlly1>

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/summer-2016/toolkit-for-anatomy-of-an-ally>

## Chaplains are Key Allies

Sr. Jean Schafer, SDS



Because women often have nowhere to go when released from jails, “boyfriend” pimps befriend and groom women during incarceration, post their bail, and offer them housing upon release. This perpetuates the cycle of human trafficking of the vulnerable.

Allyship implies not only spotting such injustice and vulnerability, but also responding to correct the injustice and support vulnerable persons. The *U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking*, a national coalition of which Salvatorian Sisters, Priests and Brothers are members, is working to become allies of these women by developing a brochure and future webinar to educate prison chaplains, volunteers and staff to address dangerous grooming.

Sr. Jean Schafer, a member of the USCSAHT *Survivor Services Working Group*, commented that, “Chaplains are key in helping women choose a safe reentry plan because they build long term relationships with inmates, gain trust, and can spot and warn against clever un-

*healthy relationships with outside people. Amazingly research indicates prison staff and chaplains are often unaware of this potential human trafficking ploy.”*



### You're Reading a Salvatorian Family Publication



In response to our JLG call to focus on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), we produce this quarterly newsletter for members of our SDS Family. We invite our members to **talk, pray, and act** on the issues we highlight. Use the links to learn more.

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