

Just Mercy

Discussion question suggestions for the movie Just Mercy (DVD available at the office).

Caution: Parents and guardians need to be aware that this movie, while incredibly inspiring, deals with very hard topics including, but not limited to, racism and death. There is never blood or death depicted directly on screen, but the pain is vivid. Moderate cursing.

Quick overview:

Civil rights attorney, Bryan Stevenson, is shocked when he meets a young person that mirrors himself on death row. He and his partners work tirelessly to free people from the heavy chains of injustice, but it is not an easy task, or a safe job. "We're proud of our civil rights monument", the townspeople all declare, as they continue to push forward systems of injustice. Based on a true story.

Questions:

- 1) 'Why on earth would you want a nice lawyer!? Nice doesn't get you anywhere.' But it does for Bryan. What's different about how he does things?
- 2) "Whatever you did, your life is still meaningful." (Bryan Stevenson) After watching the movie, could your view of the term 'pro-life' be expended?
- 3) What do you do if someone uses their power to mistreat you? What about if you see someone mistreated?

****It's easy to give a generic answer here, but dive into specific situations- it's also important to point out here that not everyone misuses their power to mistreat others!**** (Officers, Teachers, Coaches, etc...)

- 4) There are good people taking action everywhere. How did you see that exemplified in the movie? In which families? Which officers? Which inmates? Who in the judicial system?
- 5) One of the lines that struck me as the most devastating is that one of the characters says that he's never had more people ask if they could help him in his entire life than on the day of his execution. Often we wait until it's too late. Do you hesitate to help or stand up for the people in need? How can you offer to help someone else?
- 6) How we treat people matters. How we talk matters. What we say online matters. What can we do better to humanize each other and to champion equality and respect for every person?

7) Quotes: Reflect and discuss on the following quote from the movie ;

“If we look at ourselves honestly, we will realize that we all need justice, we all need mercy. And perhaps we all need some measure of unmerited grace.”

8) Explore the Equal Justice Initiative website (eji.org)

Faith Connection:

1. Discuss how this true story and the work of Mr. Stevenson and the Equal Justice Initiative show the application of Catholic Social Teaching in regard to Life and Dignity; Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; Solidarity (you will find more details on Catholic Social Teaching in the red Student Handbook page 5,6)
2. Which Commandments come onto play in the movie (5, 8 possible7)
3. The Bible makes a point to address racial issues as well. Choose one or two verses to see what Scripture teaches;
 - Luke10:25-37,
 - Numbers 15:15-16,
 - Revelation 7:9-10,
 - Galatians 3:23-29 – read Catholic Connection p.1560 in your student Catholic Youth Bible” Respect Radical Equality”.

“ I give you a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:34-35