

Discerning Our Role in Working for Change

Being active in our democracy requires evaluating where your contributions are most needed. Everyone has an important seat to take at the table of politics. Where do you see yourself?

Where Are Your Resources, Strengths, and Skills?

As we listen to the lived experiences and needs of those in our community, we are also called to consider how to best respond before we dive into action. Finding the place where we can actively making a difference is not easy. As people of faith, we believe in the unique human dignity of every person, which means that we all have different gifts and strengths.

We are not all called to do the same work in the pursuit of justice. Instead, we are called to the tasks that suits our particular situation and abilities. This does not mean always staying in our comfort zone, but we should feel fulfilled and inspired by the work we are taking on.

The same principle of identifying a person's unique skills or strengths is central to successful community organizing. Organizing has been one of the most consistently effective drivers of change across time, geographic location, and issues. Therefore, basic organizing principles shape much of the work we do at NETWORK.

In successful campaigns, organizers assess their community's assets and create a strategy based on those strengths. This is not judgmental, it does not focus on what the community lacks, but is an honest look at what resources are available to be utilized for a common purpose. Once there is a clear understanding of these strengths, then strategy can be made and action can begin.

We can "zoom in" and evaluate ourselves in the same way. What strengths or abilities do you have that can be used in to promote the common good in our nation? What connections to other individuals or groups do you have? Which issue or issues are most important to you? Do you have a connection to an issue — a personal story or profound belief — that people should hear? Where are you a trusted messenger or where would someone else be a better ambassador for your cause?

Try to answer these questions for yourself, and keep these answers in mind as you continue working for justice in our nation.

Finding My Part in the Body of Christ

By Sister Simone Campbell, SSS

Throughout my career, I have been called to respond to different challenges at different times. Our country is facing an enormous challenge right now — one we are all called to respond to. New policies and programs are announced every day that increase suffering and deny the dignity of families and individuals across the country. Too many of our elected representatives are out of touch with the reality of vulnerable communities and do not feel a sense of urgency to respond and meet their needs.

But, we can succeed in making change if we first know our part, and then do it!

One way I reflect on the work is by pondering Saint Paul's writing to the Romans. In his letter (Romans 12:5 et seq.), we are called to realize that we are all joined in one body. We are called to do our part in the body with joy. This has led me to realize that I am called to think of myself, and all of us, as belonging to the body of Christ. This has also led me to know that different parts of the body have different functions to play. We are not all the same. And, a consequence of this insight is that everyone is important in the body, even if their part is different from my own.

Living out my faith has taught me to know that we, together in creation, are all one in our effort to live with integrity and embody justice.

Right now in my role at NETWORK, I'm not feet. I am not hands. I do not do direct service. Instead, I think my contribution at this moment is to be stomach acid. I help liberate energy. I stir people up. I travel the country, meeting people and groups and I help break down food (ideas, struggles, frustrations) to liberate energy. This gives those who are the hands and feet the energy and the ability to do their part.

What part in the body of Christ are you called to be?

Are you the hands, doing the work of justice?

Are you the heart, praying for change?

Are you the mouth, speaking truth to power?

Are you the ears, listening to the experience of others?

Think about what kind of work you enjoy doing, and what is needed in our current environment. Reflect on where you feel most alive and most effective in working for change. Everyone has an important part to play in the body of Christ, even though we might have different functions. And no one is left out of the body of Christ... or out of our care.

What part of the body are you?

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS is the Executive Director of NETWORK Advocates for Catholic Social Justice.

We Pray

What happens in the mean time?

This is the question that guides my place in politics.

It pulls me back and centers me.

A lot of us are working hard to fight for policies and candidates we believe in.

A lot of us are planning rallies, and advocating; watching debates and canvassing.

A lot of us do our part in working for big, structural change.

And still, I am left thinking, *what happens in the mean time?*

Lent reminds us that in the time between now and Election Day these injustices are still happening. Deportations are happening **right now**. People are in detention centers and prisons **right now**.

These 40 days allow us an opportunity to balance addressing immediate needs and long term change. For many, it's a privilege to think about or work on the long-term change when the immediate needs rule the lives of so many.

I pray that we remember the push and pull of these complexities and that we may always be rooted in our communities first.

Amen.

Written by Melissa Cedillo

Melissa Cedillo is a graduate student at Harvard Divinity School. She is an advocate for bridging the gap between progressive politics and religion in our nation.

Take Action

This week, we are inviting you to discern your role in this election season. As you reflect, you may want to begin with Sr. Simone’s question, “What part am I in the Body of Christ?” Then, think about “How does this inform what I’ll do this election season? What is mine to do?”

Remember while the work you choose should feel authentically you, it may also challenge or stretch you a bit. God doesn’t call us to easy, comfortable places, and the Spirit is always creating anew!

Once you have a sense of the work you are called to, make a commitment to yourself that you will do your part. We hope that the prompts below help you in living out this commitment.

My 2020 Election Commitment

Because I care about: _____

_____ .

I will _____

_____ **during this election season.**

I will work with these people or organizations: _____

_____ .

If I don’t do this, then *(what are the consequences for myself, my loved ones, my community?):*

_____ .

I will ask this person to hold me accountable for my work and actions:

_____ .

