



Christians and Fairtrade



- Half the world's population are living in poverty. Over a billion people live on less than a dollar a day.
- The gap between rich and poor is getting wider.
- When commodity prices fall dramatically, they have a catastrophic impact on the lives of millions of small-scale producers, forcing many into crippling debt and countless others to lose their land and their homes.
- The poorest people in the world suffer most at the hands of unfair trade.
- The global trading system lies at the heart of this inequality.

What the Bible says:

"A poor man's field may produce abundant food but injustice sweeps it away." (Proverbs 13:23)
Unjust trading systems are not new.

"What does the Lord require of you? To act justly." (Micah 6:8).
We are required to strive for justice.

"My children, our love is not just to be words or mere talk, but something real and active" (1 John 3.18)
Christians are called to love the poor – but also to ask questions as to why they are poor.

"He has sent me to bring good news to the poor." (Luke 4:18)
Fairtrade aims to bring about "good news" for the poor with a just system that frees producers from exploitation, enabling them to lift themselves out of poverty.

What Christians have said:

"Does it seem just to you then that one man should have an abundance of riches over and above his needs, while another does not have enough even to supply his daily wants?"
Pelagius, 5th century theologian

"Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs."
St John Chrysostom

The development of economic activity and growth in production are meant to provide for the needs of human beings. Economic life is not meant solely to multiply goods produced and increase profit or power; it is ordered first of all to the service of persons, of the whole human being, and of the entire human community.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2426

*"Equal Exchange * is like drinking a cup of justice...And justice can taste outstanding."*
Rev. Timothy Bernard, Messiah Lutheran Church (* a fair trade organisation in the USA)

"Aspire not to have more but to be more".
Archbishop Oscar Romero.

As a body, the church is called to live out the values of the Kingdom of God here on earth – and be concerned for love and justice.

In this respect we need to consider how our purchases reflect that. Buying fairly traded products is one way of putting our beliefs into action.

We spend far more on buying than we ever do in giving. Our choices of purchasing can make a real difference to the lives of the people in the "third world" who grow the ingredients or make the products.

A Prayer from Fairtrade Fortnight 2001

Tilt the scales,
O God of the mustard seed:
That the poor shall see justice.
Share the feast,
O God of Eden's abundant garden:
That each crop may fetch a fair price.
Upset the tables,
O God of the upside-down Kingdom:
That the least can benefit from their trade.
Open our eyes,
O God of life in all its fullness:
That we may learn to walk the way of your son
tilting, sharing, upsetting this world
Not satisfied
until the products we bring to our table
Give a better deal, to all who hunger for one.
In His name, Amen.

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