

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OUR LADY OF FATIMA CHURCH HALL
BUSHE STREET, CUREPE
SATURDAY MARCH 27th, 2004

1.00 pm – 2.00 pm

Prayer for Justice and peace:

O God, open our hearts to the gift of your Holy Spirit as we seek to promote Your reign here in Trinidad and Tobago. Help us to become a nation where peace is built with justice and justice is guided by love, love of God and love of neighbour.

Help us to rediscover and live our faith so that our concern for social justice will be transformed into constructive action as we spread the Good News in this land.

We ask you, O God, to guide and bless all our efforts. Inspire us as you did the Prophets of old with courage, imagination and creativity.

This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen

AGENDA

11.45 am – Lunch

1.00 pm - Registration (Registration will commence during lunch to save time).

1.10 pm - Opening Prayers, Welcome and Address by His Grace, Most Revd.
Edward J. Gilbert, C.Ss.R., Archbishop of Port of Spain

1.20 pm - CCSJ Report and Questions Leela Ramdeen, Chair of CCSJ

1.40 pm - Financial Report and Questions Mario Young, CCSJ's Treasurer

1.55 pm - Vote of Thanks

2.00 pm - Closing Prayer

CCSJ'S AGM REPORT

FOR YEAR: March 2003 – March 2004

This report focuses on the following areas:

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1. THE CHAIR'S REPORT

a) INTRODUCTION:

Following Synod 2003, His Grace appointed Ms Leela Ramdeen as Episcopal Delegate for Social Justice in the Archdiocese of POS. On 29th March 2003, the Catholic Commission for Social Justice held its first meeting. This report provides a brief overview of the Commission's work over the past year.

When His Grace blessed us at our first meeting in March 2003, we all knew that to achieve our vision and mission as outlined in **Appendix A**, we would need the prayers and support of all people of goodwill.

In facing the many challenges during the year, members of CCSJ have been strengthened by their belief that God's grace and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit will enable us to undertake our tasks faithfully.

b) CCSJ MEMBERS – TEAM WORK

It is said that great achievements are not born from a single vision but from the combination of many distinctive viewpoints. Diversity challenges assumptions, opens minds and unlocks our potential to solve any problems we may face. Teamwork is the

ability to work together toward a common vision; the ability to direct accomplishment toward organisational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results. CCSJ Team sees every obstacle as an opportunity.

CCSJ aims to harness the expertise and strengths of each member of the Commission, Standing Committees (SC), Resource Persons and Parish Link Person(s) – see **Appendix B**. However, this is quite a challenge, particularly as each member has a number of other commitments. Unfortunately, over the year some members have left both the Commission and the SCs. Thankfully, others have joined both the Commission and the SCs. To date there are 27 members of the Commission and 41 members of the SCs.

It is important that each member of the Commission belongs to a SC and plays an active role in the work of the SC of his/her choice and in the work of the Commission as a whole. At the end of CCSJ's first year, each member of the Commission and of an SC is asked to reflect on his/her position on CCSJ and determine what further contribution he/she can make to the Commission to facilitate the achievement of its aims and objectives.

Teamwork also involves working closely with Mrs Wilma Corryat, Secretary at the Justice Desk at Archbishop's House. It is important to note that CCSJ is negotiating with the Archdiocesan Communications Commission (ACC) to share a Secretary as Mrs Corryat was appointed for five x half days and CCSJ's workload is such that the Commission requires a full-time Secretary at the Office. Initially, the Secretary identified by the Acting Episcopal Delegate of the ACC will work on a voluntary basis.

c) **INCORPORATION**: Plans are in train to incorporate CCSJ as a non profit making Company. This will facilitate the Commissions work in a variety of ways. Hamel-Smith & Co are taking the necessary steps to achieve this aim. To date CCSJ's name has been accepted and CCSJ's Objectives have been sent to the Registry for consideration. It is expected that the Commission will be incorporated within the next month or two.

d) CCSJ's EMPOWERMENT PROJECT - GONZALES

CCSJ is concerned to reduce poverty and social exclusion in T&T and to promote human development. To this end, CCSJ has launched a long-term project to address social exclusion. The Project is based in St Martin de Porres Parish in Gonzales and is led by Fr Jason Gordon, Parish Priest in the area and member of CCSJ. In the few months before the Project commenced, about 8 young people died in the area due mainly to drug related shootings.

The challenge for us in T&T is to develop confident, safe and fulfilled communities where people are proud to live, work and play and are all pleased to visit. Only targeted efforts by many partners will achieve social justice for all. Community planning is about service providers, agencies, the voluntary sector and the private sector coming together to construct and deliver a common agenda for communities – one that is influenced by those

communities and focuses on outcomes. It provides the framework and the drive to deliver social justice at a local and national level.

CCSJ recognises that empowering communities include extending participation, access to skills, knowledge and resources. Mobilising people for progress is crucial. This Project has been a collaborative effort involving a Steering Group comprising residents - including youth, 2 local councillors; the MP for the area, representatives from the Police Service, Fr. Roger Paponette, Fr Jason Gordon/CCSJ, corporate sponsors, and other stakeholders. A series of Town Meetings were held at the beginning of the Project and will be on-going to ensure that the community is involved in the Project.

Tackling the myriad of problems facing this community is not easy. There is no single solution or set of actions that will achieve the results. We will use a range of measures and resources to do this and actions from within the community itself will contribute to the necessary regeneration of the area.

Community renewal recognises that local people know best the priorities of their own neighbourhood and that successful regeneration depends upon them having the opportunities and tools they need to get involved. Active citizenship is built on principles of mutuality. It is about engagement with the community that you are a part of, for the benefit of yourself, your family and those around you.

The Steering Group developed a Plan of Action and sought to galvanise local people and other stakeholders around a vision of change and practical action. This Plan is being implemented and include, inter alia,

- enhancing the environment by cleaning up the neighbourhood, addressing issues such as uneven pavements, street lights that were not working etc. Improving the quality of the lived-environment is an important aspect of community regeneration as it helps to foster pride among residents. This process included establishing community notice boards at strategic locations within the community – as part of the process to ‘build community’;
- tackling inequalities, regenerating the community and empowering residents in the area by assisting them in the process of turning their lives around and ‘reclaiming’ their streets/community thus creating an environment in which each person can live in dignity and realise his/her potential
- exploring/securing training and employment opportunities for residents;
- seeking to address housing needs in the area;
- planning an educational programme to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities of youth in the area;

- identifying appropriate space and establishing/developing recreational facilities for youth in the area;
- resurrecting the tradition of holding an annual 3 month football tournament in the area involving teams from various parts of T&T; .
- reducing crime, the fear of crime and drugs misuse in the area/in society;
- working to heal the community which has been devastated by the deaths of a number of residents, particularly youths in the area;
- establishing an Internet Café in the Church Hall for use by residents.. Training sessions, Internet awareness days and so on will be offered to develop residents' skills in information technology;

Fr Jason secured the support of a prominent Businessman to Chair the Board that undertook to oversee the establishment of the internet café which, by God's grace, was established in February 2004 and which will be officially opened by His Grace on 2nd April, 2004.

In the age of the Information Revolution, disadvantaged sections of our community are at risk of being further marginalized unless access to, and training in the use of the technology is made available in public places. We believe that the Internet has a role to play in empowering communities and should not be restricted to the more economically privileged sectors of our nation. Greater connectivity will open up new opportunities for the community in Gonzales.

CCSJ hopes to use this Project as a model by recording strategies employed and progress made in terms of good practice and lessons learned and to use the information to implement transferable aspects of the Project in other areas. CCSJ recognises that to renew the community in Gonzales we need to build links between social cohesion and economic development.

e) COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS/AWARENESS RAISING

The following is a sample of work in which CCSJ has been engaged in this area:

- 1) Running workshops/seminars
 - a) at the AEC Youth Assembly in July 2003 on : Internet Café; HIV/AIDS; People of the Beatitudes; Drugs, Alcohol Abuse & Violence;
 - b) at Youth Rallies
 - c) for the Prison Ministry Team
 - d) for Senior Prison Officers at the Maximum Security Prison, Arouca.
 - e) with schools in Laventille and at Holy Name Convent on issues relating to HIV/AIDS.

- 2) Addressing groups such as:
 - a) Youth at the Youth Rallies held in Sangre Grande, Petit Bourg, La Romaine on the theme: “From Violence to Compassion”;
 - b) The Catholic Men’s Group in Chaguanas;
 - c) Parishioners of
 - St Francis Parish, Sangre Grande on the theme: “If you want peace, work for justice”
 - St Bartholomew’s, Tabaquite/Gran Couva during their Lenten Retreat on The Beatitudes
 - St Finbar’s Planning Committee, addressing issues relating to crime and violence
 - d) Principals, staff, parents and students at a number of schools around the Country and at Catholic Teachers’ “Day of Renewal” in 4 Vicariates in 2003
 - e) Sisters at Rosary Monastery
 - f) The Autistic Society of T&T at their AGM
 - g) Lions Club – at their AGM
 - h) Prisoners at the maximum security prison, Arouca on the Prison Authority’s National Day of Prayer entitled: “Restoring the Nation through Spiritual consciousness” organised by the Prison Services and the Council of Ministers and Chaplains of Prisons (January 2004)
 - i) The general public as participants in initiatives organised by NGOs, other faith communities, and others, e.g. at Woodford Sq. – at an event organised by ASJA, at City Hall, POS at a public debate on Crime and Violence organised by the IRO.
- 3) In his Pastoral Letter in December, His Grace requested that the Episcopal Delegate for Education in dialogue with CCSJ and the professional facilitators in process, who serve on the Synod Implementation Committee, provide principals of Catholic schools with guidelines for dialogue on crime and violence to allow the school population to participate in the Archdiocesan Conversation on Crime and Violence.

CCSJ's Chair held meetings with Ms Hazel Reis, Episcopal Delegate for Education, and Linda de Four, a member of the Synod process team to prepare the guidelines. In light of the fact that the newly elected Executive of the Principals' Association have committed themselves to preparing the necessary guidelines, the Chair of CCSJ produced extensive notes to support them in this exercise. Copies of these notes were sent to His Grace and to other relevant individuals.

- 4) As requested by His Grace in the Pastoral Letter referred to above, the Chair of CCSJ met with the Episcopal Delegate for Catechetics, Sr Columba, and Linda de Four of the Synod Process Team and produced for catechists of the Archdiocese guidelines for dialogue on crime and violence to allow young people in catechetical formation to participate in the Archdiocesan Conversation on this issue.
- 5) CCSJ takes every advantage to be present and to raise awareness of social justice issues at events to which the Commission is invited; whenever CCSJ represents His Grace; or whenever the opportunity arises e.g.
 - a) FTAA consultation at Crowne Plaza
 - b) Consultation to finalise the Strategic Plan of the Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women.
 - c) 1 Week Seminar organised by the Ministry of Health, PAHO & WHO on "Sexual & Reproductive Health for Religious Leaders"
 - d) Launch of the National Child Development Centre initiated by Families in Action and MACE (a Boston based Association) (March 2004)
 - e) 2 day Seminar organised by Fr Moses with a US team from the organisation, "COURAGE"
 - f) Seminar organised by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education entitled: "HIV/AIDS & STIs: An Innovative Approach". The Seminar was led by a team of professionals from Louisiana, USA and also focused on Abstinence
 - g) CLICO's Seminar on Crime and Violence, at which former Mayor Giuliani, New York, was the main speaker
 - h) Conference entitled: "The Public Service Commission & Governance in the 21st Century"
 - i) Colloquium on "Restorative Justice" organised by the Attorney General

- i) TV, and radio programmes e.g. on Life issues such as Abortion, Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, Education, Poverty, Crime & Violence (organised by Living Water Community), CCSJ's work and so on

6) GLOBAL SOLIDARITY:

- a) The Chair and Fr Jason Gordon were invited to participate in the Racial Justice Congress organised by the Catholic Association for Racial Justice in England and Wales. Fr Jason was one of the keynote speakers and received a standing ovation for his excellent contribution. CCSJ's Chair was the Congress Reporter and also drafted the Charter, Statement and Congress Report.

- b) CCSJ encouraged many individuals to sign the petition which was organised online to save the life of Amina Lawal, the Nigerian woman who was condemned to be stoned to death there for committing adultery. As a result of millions of 'signatures' online from people around the world, Amina's life was spared.

7) CCSJ's WEBSITE is a useful strategy for raising awareness of social justice issues and for disseminating information about the work of the Commission. Our webstats are very encouraging. Since the site went 'live' in June 2003, the numbers of visitors from around the world to our website have been: 149, 377, 573, 941, 1091, 1176, 902, 1158, and 1190 respectively.

His Eminence, Cardinal Martino, President of the Pontifical Commission for J&P has also mentioned in his letter in **Appendix C** that he has visited our website

8) ASK WHY? TV PROGRAMME

This live monthly TV Programme which was initiated in 2002 by a group comprising: Credo Foundation for Justice, Living Water Community and St Vincent de Paul Society, before CCSJ was established, has been officially incorporated into the work of CCSJ. To date 21 x 1 hour social justice programmes have been aired and each is on tape for individuals/groups to borrow or purchase from Trinity Studios. A list of topics available is included in this report at **Appendix D**

CCSJ plans to prepare attractive 'sleeves' and notes to accompany each tape and to market these to schools, RCIA groups, Catechists and so on.

- 9) CCSJ's WEEKLY ARTICLE in the secular newspaper, The Guardian, since May 2003, is an effective way of raising the awareness of the general public about Catholic Social Teaching and seeking to mobilise support from the general public, irrespective of the religious persuasion of individuals, to promote social justice in T&T and in our world. There are many 'spin-offs' from this media presence e.g. e-mails and telephone responses, invitations to speak at various events, requests for further information on the topic in question. Indeed, only recently a T&T Senator,

having read one of CCSJ's articles in The Guardian, requested further information on a particular topic that was scheduled to be discussed in the Senate. All CCSJ's articles are uploaded on the Commission's website.

10. CCSJ has also organised a number of events to raise awareness of social justice issues and with the aim of effecting structural and attitudinal changes. Noteworthy among these events was

a) CCSJ's Seminar at Hilton Hotel in November 2003 on the theme: "Developing New Approaches to the Criminal Justice System" which was well attended. Follow-up work is in train. CCSJ's Chair has met with a Senior Magistrate and with a member of the Law Association (LA) and it was agreed at the meeting that the member of the LA will redraft the sentencing sections of certain Acts of Parliament a list of which was drawn up at the meeting, with the aim of expanding the sentencing powers of Judges and Magistrates. Action will then be taken to share the draft more widely. It was also agreed at the meeting that CCSJ's Chair will approach Justice Annetine Sealy, Principal of Hugh Wooding Law School, to discuss with her the possibility of incorporating "Restorative Justice" into the Law School's Mediation Course. The Chair has spoken to Justice Sealy and a meeting is being arranged at which the Course Leader for Mediation will be present to discuss the issue.

b) CCSJ's meeting on "Children & Youth at Risk". As a result of that meeting, CCSJ has established a new SC to address this issue.

11) CCSJ has used the opportunity at meetings with the PM, the Leader of the Opposition, and with a number of Ministers of Government to outline the Commission's mandate and to express particular concerns relating to social justice issues that impact on the lives of people in T&T.

f) PARISH-BASED WORK/CASE WORK

In August 2003 The Chair wrote to all parish priests asking each priest to

- a) draw up a list of social justice issues, in order of priority, that need attention in his parish;
- b) identify individual(s) in the parish who will be prepared to accept the role of "Social Justice Co-ordinator(s) or Link Person(s)" and who will liaise with CCSJ on social justice issues;
- c) send the list, the name of the Link Person(s), and any comments to CCSJ by the end of October, 2003 so that CCSJ can determine how best the Commission can assist each parish in its efforts to build a community in which justice, peace and love prevail.

To date CCSJ has only received names from 12 Parishes (**Appendix B**). Some priests are in the process of seeking to establish parish social justice teams rather than identify one individual and that this is taking some time to achieve. If CCSJ is to support parishes more effectively, it is imperative for the Commission to develop close working links with one or more individuals whose specific focus in the parish is on 'social justice' issues.

Sr Joan Duerst has kindly agreed to liaise with our Link Persons in parishes and has been in contact with them. It is hoped that each Link Person will establish a small group at parish level to avoid isolation and to facilitate social justice work. A plan of action to support each Link Person/parish will be developed in due course.

CCSJ has also been involved in casework such as

- supporting a teacher in her attempts to obtain over 25 years of back-pay
- taking up issues with relevant Ministers e.g. for a pensioner who has moved from Mayaro to Maraval and is still waiting for the paper work to be regularised after over a year
- taking up the case of security officers who are being exploited by their firms e.g. firms not paying National Insurance; insisting that workers work for 3 x 15 hour shifts back-to-back; not paying workers and so on
- assisting an elderly person who was being financially abused by her housekeeper
- supporting a family whose young daughter was raped at gunpoint

CCSJ also deals with issues relating to the Catholic Church as well as to the wider community. For example, CCSJ wrote last year to the Chair of Council of Priests about the need for clear guidelines regarding protocol for dealing with complaints about priests within the Catholic Church. It is hoped that guidelines will be developed and made available to the wider public.

g) TRAINING FOR CCSJ MEMBERS

“So here I am – not yet trained in all the Catholic Social Teachings, but...” Mikkel Trestrail, Chair of CCSJ’s Prayer Committee, wrote these words in his contribution to our Newsletter. Clearly, each member of CCSJ would admit that he/she needs on-going training to develop our knowledge-base on the Church’s Social Teaching and our confidence to use this knowledge in our attempts to “See, judge, act” from a social justice perspective.

CCSJ allocated one hour at the beginning of each of its monthly meetings to train members in this area. For a variety of reasons we have not been able to run the training courses at each meeting. Members are also asked to use the link section on our website to access material that they can read to assist in developing their awareness of social justice issues.

In November 2003 , Sr Julie Peters ran a retreat for members of the Commission and its Standing Committees. Unfortunately, not all members were able to attend. Another retreat is being planned for 2004.

CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FINANCIAL REPORT

Saturday March 27th 2004

Greetings:

Your Grace, Archbishop of Port of Spain – Edward J Gilbert; Ms Leela Ramdeen, Episcopal Delegate/ Chair- Catholic Commission for Social Justice, fellow members of CCSJ, members of the Catholic Community, ladies and gentlemen, a pleasant good afternoon.

It gives me great pleasure to present this Financial Report at the first Annual General Meeting of CCSJ.

Initial Funding for CCSJ

In March 2003, our Commission submitted and was granted an initial allocation of \$60,200.00 from the Chancery, Archdiocese of Port of Spain. This allocation which included funds for both capital and recurrent costs was intended to support the work of the Commission to December, 2003. At the time CCSJ relied on the conceptual understanding of its function in preparing that budget and as it turned out the work of our Commission required more substantial financial support.

Early in the life of CCSJ, we identified that research and the completion of Position Papers by our subcommittees would be essential to the work of our Commission. To this end we approached First Citizens Bank, who generously granted us \$30,000.00 to support the work of CCSJ generally and the underwriting of the cost of a Research Assistant in particular.

Inflows and Expenditure to December 31st 2003.

The accounts of CCSJ are maintained in two distinct streams

1. Firstly – Expenditure underwritten by the Chancery, and
2. Secondly – Inflows and expenditure specific to CCSJ (for which we have our own banking relationships).

Expenditure of Chancery Funds.

The total expenditure of Chancery funds for the period to 03-12-31 amounted to **\$102,799.40**

The main categories of expenditure being:

1. Capital expenditure \$24,000.00 mainly for computer equipment and furniture.
2. Stipends and staff expenses for Chair and staff - \$41,66.62, and
3. Other recurrent costs \$ 37,133.78

While CCSJ exceeded its original allocation of \$60,200.00 my Episcopal Delegate and I are confident that the work of our commission was sufficient to provide the chancery with the comfort and conviction that continued support to CCSJ was warranted.

Inflows and Expenditure of CCSJ generated funds.

The major portion of the \$30,000.00 grant was placed in a money market account and periodic transfers were made to our operating current account as required. Funds paid out from our current account for stipends totaled \$8,200.00

Our Halfway House Project got off the ground with a donation to cover the cost of the conference, and the initial making of \$500.00 contributions by committed members of the public. As at 03-12-31 donations to the Halfway house stood at \$1,500.00

We therefore closed the financial year with the following Bank Account Balances:

- Current Account \$3,453.37
- Money Market Account \$20,682.17
- **TOTAL \$24,135.54**

Expectations for 2004

CCSJ expects to be engaged in a number of projects in 2004, the major ones being:

- Our first Annual Fundraising Dinner, which will be our major fund raising project for the year, where we expect to net approximately \$200,000.00. Plans for this project, as Leela mentioned are well underway.
- The securing of the premises for our Halfway House, which we expect to cost upwards of \$600,000.00. We are encouraged by donations of just over \$100,000.00 received to date.
- The continued work and projects of each of our Sub-committees.

All these activities formed part of our budget submission to the Chancery for the 2004 financial year. We are recently advised of the allocation of \$175,000.00 in Chancery funding, a shortfall of \$303,000.0. We will therefore have to address the following options:

1. Cut back the planned work of the Commission,
2. Plan and execute additional fund raising ventures, or
3. make another justifiable approach to the Chancery, based on sterling work and contribution being made by the CCSJ.

My personal view is that option one is not an option, the work must be done. Option two has possibilities to be explored. However option three is the preferred option, and I am counting on all of us present here this afternoon, each and every one of you, to support the work of our Commission, show that if we want Peace, we must work for Justice; and more importantly we must be prepared to commit our financial resources to that work. It is in giving we receive and I expect that each one of us and the Church will receive tenfold.

Conclusion

In closing, I wish to thank Clive Belgrave for approaching me and offering my name to our Episcopal Delegate, and to Leela Ramdeen and the rest of the Commission for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Treasurer.

I thank you
Mario Young
04-03-23

3. STANDING COMMITTEES'/COMMITTEES' REPORTS

a) TOBAGO COMMITTEE

Her Worship, Ms Gill, has been working diligently with her CCSJ Tobago Committee to promote social justice in Tobago. The Committee has drawn up a plan of action which is being implemented. Ms Gill's Committee has a credible presence there and members receive invitations to various events, including consultative events, where their views are sought. Members are also involved in a range of charitable and social action work.

The Committee is in the process of establishing a Justice Desk at a Church facility called "The Ark", in Scarborough. A permanent Justice Desk will facilitate the Committee's work.

This Committee has held various events, including an inter-denominational Vigil on HIV/AIDS on the same evening as CCSJ's Vigil in San Fernando.

a) COMMUNICATIONS STANDING COMMITTEE

The Commission records its sincerest thanks to Mr Clive Belgrave, Chair of this Standing Committee, for his tireless work to support our various initiatives. To date, all publications by this SC have been of a high standard, very professional and have been produced at no cost to CCSJ. For example, Mr Belgrave has obtained sponsorship for:

a) CCSJ's Newsletter entitled: 'CCSJ Working for Justice': 40,000 copies of CCSJ's first Newsletter have been distributed to all parishes, members of the IRO, relevant Government Ministers, NGOs, individuals and groups/organisations, including Catholic groups/organisations. It is noteworthy that His Grace received a letter recently from His Eminence, Cardinal Renato Martino, President of the Pontifical Commission for Social Justice, Rome, congratulating him and us on the Newsletter and on the Commission's work and encouraging us as we move forward. A copy of this letter is attached at **Appendix C**.

b) Pennant & Banner: CCSJ now has a pennant and banner which is available for use by all SCs and will be used by the Commission at its various events.

c) Prayer Cards containing CCSJ's Prayer for Justice and Peace. These are particularly useful for distribution at workshops.

d) Flyers and invitations for CCSJ events.

e) Adverts and press releases in the media

Since Mr Belgrave is now also the Acting Episcopal Delegate of the Archdiocesan Communications Commission, his membership of and collaboration with CCSJ is particularly appreciated.

b) EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

This Standing Committee, Chaired by Sr Roberta O’Flaherty, has done sterling work in its attempts, inter alia, to educate Catholics on the biblical concept of social justice and Catholic Social Teaching. This SC has a clear vision and mission. Members have developed a Plan of Action which includes introductory workshop sessions on social justice from a Catholic perspective and sessions involving Boards of Management, Principals and teachers of schools.

Workshops have been organised and conducted across the Archdiocese for various interest groups during 2003. Details of all workshops are advertised in the Catholic News and on CCSJ’s website before the event. At workshops, the atmosphere created is one that encourages interactive sharing and participation. The material used by the skilled Presenters encourages reflection on the meaning of social justice.

Participants are also introduced to the Reflection/Action Process of analysis and action and are invited to become “Voices that Challenge”. It is hoped that participants leave with a greater awareness that the social mission of the Church is an essential part of our Catholic Faith, and that they are empowered so that they can make a difference in their parishes, in their community, in T&T and in the world at large.

Further activities to raise awareness of the social justice teachings of the Church are planned. A 7 week programme of more detailed training was scheduled to take place from January 2004. However, the low take up of some workshops during the course of 2003 has led the SC to review its strategies. Therefore, the 7 week programme has been postponed for the time being.

It is hoped that if CCSJ’s plan is successful, that is, to mobilise parishioners through the work of Social Justice Link Persons in parishes, then there should be a greater ‘take-up’ of places at workshops and so on. It is important that CCSJ presses forward with its plan to work with such Link Persons as mission is where people are, in their parishes. Therefore, CCSJ’s work at a local level will only succeed if parish priests, social justice link persons and other parishioners in each parish work with CCSJ to address local social justice issues.

This Standing Committee has successfully negotiated with the Editor of the Catholic News to have included in each edition of the Catholic News a **“Social Justice Quote of the Week.”** This initiative commenced on February 8th, 2004.

c) FAMILY LIFE AND COMMUNITIES STANDING COMMITTEE

The Social Justice issues which are assigned to this Committee are wide-ranging. For ease of reference and in the interest of focus, the Committee established the following categories of issues, namely: “PRO-LIFE AND THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON, SOCIAL ISSUES, SOCIAL SERVICES AND SOCIAL POLICIES.”

It was noted that the pro-life and related issues and some of the social issues are also assigned to the Standing Committee on Youth as they relate to Youth. The Committee therefore recognised that there would be need for the 2 Standing Committees to work closely.

Membership:

There are 6 functioning members of this Committee, in addition to the Chair and the Chair of the Standing Committee on Youth. Vicariates represented are the Northern, the Suburban and the Eastern Vicariates. The Southern Vicariate had proposed a representative who found it inconvenient to travel from Palo Seco to POS for meetings save on week-ends. The Committee was unable to accommodate the request; a replacement has not been named to date.

Action:

The Committee has met every month since its inaugural meeting in April 2003.

In accordance with the post of Synod implementation guidelines, the Committee has finalised a strategic implementation plan in the context of decisions on the vision and mission projected by its members. Specific actions taken or in train in pursuance of the above are as follows:

Re: pro-life and related issues and certain connected issues:

1. The Committee is in active collaboration with the SC on Youth and the Archdiocesan Youth Co-ordinator to produce 6 programmes with Trinity Catholic Network, based on the Chapters in the book written by His Holiness, Pope John Paul 11 entitled: “Love and Responsibility”. The first of these programmes will be aired on April 16th 2004.

This action is pursuant to the Committee’s specific strategy to “create awareness of the Church’s teachings on life issues, sex and human sexuality” in programmes directed to adolescents and young adults.

2. Supplementary to the above, the Committee will establish a personal development mentorship programme to provide, inter alia, a support system for youths who need it. To this end the Committee has been developing a training programme for mentors which will be initiated by mid-year according to plans.

3. Pursuant to the strategy of “promoting the sanctity of chastity in and out of marriage as a way of life”, the Committee has met with the Archdiocesan Family Life Commission (AFLC) and agreement was reached on practical collaboration between the 2 bodies in the implementation of their respective programmes.

Re: Social Services

Pursuant to the mission “To promote support services to families”, the Chair has met with the Chair of the newly formed Standing Committee on Children and Youth at Risk regarding that SC’s proposed initiative to review current care provision for children and youth in homes/institutions.

Pursuant to the mission to promote the importance of strengthening the family, the Committee has initiated action on developing a programme/project to mark the UN International Day of the Family on 15th May 2004.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that early in its deliberations the Committee resolved to take Mary, Our Blessed Mother and Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, as Patroness of our Committee, its deliberations and its work.

d) FINANCE STANDING COMMITTEE

CCSJ’s Treasurer is also Chair of CCSJ’s Finance Standing Committee. This SC is playing a major role in the forthcoming fundraising dinner at the Trinidad Hilton on Tuesday 8th June 2004.

e) HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

T&T faces many challenges in the health sector. CCSJ issued a press statement on health issues in the first few months of its establishment. CCSJ also made a decision to produce and publish a position paper on Health. A draft document has been prepared but needs to be updated/completed.

The Chair of this SC has resigned as Chair of the SC due to heavy commitments at work, but remains a member of the Commission. The Commission will need to identify a new Chair as soon as possible. In the meantime, CCSJ’s Chair will lead work in this area and will complete the Health Position Paper by the end of May 2004.

f) POVERTY & SOCIAL EXCLUSION STANDING COMMITTEE

Government statistics in November 2003 highlighted the fact that 39% of our people in T&T live below the poverty line. Linked to this official statistics last year showed that while national unemployment was 10.2%, unemployment among 15 –19 year olds stood at 30.2%. (Since then both sets of unemployment figures have risen). If one links poverty, unemployment, poor housing, lack of basic amenities, poor skills and/or educational attainment and so on, it is clear that these combined factors lead to social exclusion of a large proportion of T&T's citizens.

The AEC (Caribbean Bishops) Document on Crime and Violence is instructive as it outlines some of the factors that contribute to crime and violence in our region and poverty and social exclusion are included among these factors. The joint statement issued by His Grace and CCSJ in July 2003 on Crime also highlighted the need for us to address poverty and social exclusion.

One of our major challenges on CCSJ has been to replace the Chair of this SC. Mr James Potter has recently agreed to Chair this SC. His wide range of expertise will assist us in forging ahead to address issues in this area. About 5 Current members of CCSJ are already members of this SC.

Social capital is critical for societies to thrive economically – to tackle poverty and for development to be sustainable. If we respect the dignity of each human individual we must reject strategies that promote dependency. The future success of our country cannot be secured unless we

- ensure that no one is at a disadvantage because of where he/she lives;
- have a clear commitment to, and provide opportunities for, people from all walks of life to overcome any barriers to their own personal successes;
- address the issues that impact on the lives of people living in deprived areas in T&T.

g) PRAYER COMMITTEE

This Standing Committee has been working actively e.g. to organise CCSJ's

- Vigil at the Parish of St Francis of Assisi, Sangre Grande on the Theme: Restorative Justice (RJ). This took place during RJ week which was celebrated internationally. (Nov.2003)
- Retreat and Mass for CCSJ members and members of SCs on the theme: "We are one body". (Nov. 2003). Sr Julie Peters led the Retreat and His Grace was the Chief Celebrant at the Mass.

- Vigil at the Parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, San Fernando on the Theme: “Youth and HIV/AIDS and Chastity”(Feb.2004).

Mr Trestrail, Chair of this SC, plans to organise teams of “Prayer Petitioners” around the country so that CCSJ can call on them to pray for various causes.

This SC is also planning CCSJ’s retreat for 2004.

h) RESEARCH COMMITTEE

CCSJ’s Research Assistant, Taresa Best, commenced her work on 1st July 2003. During her first 3 months she worked on producing a draft for the Commission’s Position paper on Health. She worked with the then Chair of the Health Standing Committee in gathering information, and held interviews with persons in the field. The first draft of the paper was produced in early September and was redrafted in October.

Subsequently, a major report produced by the Government in 2002 and entitled “Proceedings: National Health Consultation August 2002: Working together for better Health Care” was brought to CCSJ’s attention. In light of this report, the draft Position Paper on Health has to be updated significantly.

Since there is now no Chair of the SC for Health from that position, CCSJ’s Chair will undertake to update the Position Paper by the end of May 2004.

Ms Best has established a resource library at the Justice Desk which is constantly being updated. It contains resources relevant to each Standing Committee, catholic social teaching documents and local statistical information. Not only can it be accessed from the office but some of the resources can be accessed online, in the private section of the Commission’s website.

Since the ASK WHY? TV programme came under CCSJ’s mandate, Ms Best has supplied the production team with the information they need to facilitate the production of each programme.

From December 2003 – February 2004, Ms Best focused on updating CCSJ’s website. Now there is more local information on CCSJ’s website. Also, each Standing Committee’s page has further information pertinent to it, as well links to other web pages that may help the viewer to develop awareness of each issue.

Ms Best is working to create a “CCSJ photo album” on its website. Photos from any CCSJ event will be uploaded on this webpage . To date CCSJ has photos taken at its Youth vigil and at its first Education Standing Committee workshop.

A visitors' forum is being developed for the Youth SC web page. Ms Best and Ms James, Chair of the Youth SC will be in charge of hosting the forum. For the time being the forum will be by invitation only to prevent any obscene language or unwanted posted messages.

Ms Best plans to compile an e-mail list of young persons involved in church groups, such as Youth for Christ, Youth 2000, persons involved in Youth Leadership training and members of CCSJ's Youth SC. This list will facilitate the operation of the proposed forum. On a weekly basis there will be a topic which will be discussed on the forum with the aim of raising awareness of social justice issues.

CCSJ had prioritised "Poverty" as the next area on which a Position Paper should be written. However, in the absence of a Chair of that SC, only preliminary work was undertaken. Sr Joan Duerst has assisted Ms Best in gathering information on Poverty.

Since the establishment of CCSJ's new Standing Committee: "Children and Youth at Risk", it was agreed that Ms Best will assist in gathering information and in supporting Sr Arlene, Chair of that SC. This area of work includes issues relating to Poverty, so, in one sense, Ms Best is still focusing on that issue.

In March of this year, the Standing Committee for Children and Youth at Risk embarked on a survey that will form the basis for a database on this topic. Questionnaires have been sent to all Catholic-run homes/institutions for completion and return to CCSJ before the first week of April.

Ms Best will contact the homes to enquire whether they wish support in completing the questionnaire. If they do, then Sr Arlene, Ms Best and 2 UWI students who are on practicum at St Dominics will assist. Once the information is collated, that SC plans to run a seminar on the needs of homes/institutions and of children/youth in these homes, particularly in light of the proposed Children's Authority.

i) RESTORATIVE JUSTICE & POST-PRISON SUPPORT STANDING COMMITTEE

Vision Statement: Healing the Effects of Crime in our Communities

This Standing Committee was formed in June 2003. It comprises nine (9) members and meets monthly. Noting the vast amount of work that is needed to be done we have prioritized our objectives for our first year. We have therefore named three objectives which we have since pursued using various strategies. Our objectives are to:

1. Raise Public Consciousness on Restorative Justice Paradigm and its merits to society
2. Launch a Re-habilitation Programme at the Golden Grove prison, Arouca
3. Establish 'After-Care Services' for ex-inmates as alternatives to crime.

The public education thrust has been pursued through newspaper articles in the secular press and the Catholic News as well as through the electronic media namely, the TCN television programme. We have used both these media to give a succinct description of the RJ paradigm.

A comparative analysis of the RJ model vis a vis Retributive Justice was undertaken in the Catholic News. Further to this during the International Restorative Justice Week (November 17th-21st) we hosted a seminar at the Hilton entitled a *National Conversation on Restorative Justice*. This took place with members of the Judiciary, Prison Administration and the Government Minister responsible for Rehabilitation.

We also intend to approach the Organisers of the RBTT Secondary Schools debate to have Restorative Justice debated as a way of raising consciousness about the model among the youthful population. We are about to begin discussions with a school in South Trinidad to look into the possibility of adopting a Restorative Justice approach at the school as a means of resolving disputes in the school community.

The Walk -Tall Programme was launched in Mid-October, 2003 at Golden Grove prison. It is a two-phase programme. The first is at the prison during the pre-release stage of incarceration. The Programme enjoys the full co-operation of the Prison authorities and has been described by inmates as ‘an excellent opportunity for personal growth’.

It is a 40-week programme whose overall aim is to help reduce recidivism, which stands at about 56% in T&T, by fostering attitudinal change and personal hope in participants. A number of professionals have facilitated topics ranging from self-esteem development to childhood pain. As at 24th March **sixty** inmates have benefited from this programme.

Our committee has begun fund-raising for the implementation of Resolution 28 (Synod 2003). We have collected in excess of \$103,000 and are grateful to the individuals and corporate citizens who have contributed thus far. Our aim is to collect \$500,000. This sum will allow us to launch a comprehensive and effective after-care service for inmates as concrete alternatives to crime. This will be facilitated through a Half-Way House Project (the second phase of the WalkTall programme) providing accommodation for 25 ex-prisoners for about one year.

This service will include skills training, counselling, mediation services, job-placement and continued public education. The Community Development Fund has given us a grant of \$148000 towards start-up capital. We await the government’s response to our numerous calls and meetings for assistance for running costs, in light of budget promises to set up Half-way Houses.

To date, we continue to search for a site that is suitable for the continued work of rehabilitation. Additionally we have conceptualised ‘a model for the Half-way House programme that will AID IN THE DE-INSTITUTIONALISATION PROCESS that is crucial to eliminating prisoner independence on the system for survival. It will consist of

10-15 small dwelling houses each accommodating 2 ex-inmates. There will be a common eating and dining area. WE FEEL THIS IS CRUCIAL as this 'village' style arrangement will facilitate the transition from perhaps years of living in an institution to living outside of an institution.

We call for further financial assistance to aid the projects and undertakings described above. We would like to create a culture of volunteerism that would ultimately facilitate the coming to fruition of our dream of seeing Restorative Justice adopted by society as a means of healing the effects of crime and the brokenness it brings to our community. The journey is long and hard, but rewarding.

j) YOUTH STANDING COMMITTEE

Ms Adanna James, Chair of this SC, is working with Sr Kathy and the Youth Secretariat to produce a monthly 1 hour TV programme on TCN. This programme will focus on Youth issues. Other collaborators in this initiative include: Youth 2000 and CCSJ's Family Life and Communities SC. The first 6 programmes will be based on discussions of the document entitled: "Love and Responsibility."

The Caribbean Council of Churches has accepted Ms James' Pastoral HIV/AIDS proposal to run a weekend workshop for young leaders from various faith communities on this issue. CCC will fund the programme. Ms James is preparing a budget to be submitted to CCC for approval.

This SC also intends to undertake follow-up work after the above-mentioned weekend workshop. To this end, Ms James is completing a questionnaire for submission to Mr Michael Alexander, Director of Caricom AIDS project who has informed her that the UN has allocated funds to Caricom to support abstinence related programmes.

This SC has been involved in a wide range of activities e.g.

- Vigil in San Fernando on HIV/AIDS and Abstinence
- workshops at schools on HIV/AIDS and STIs
- HIV/AIDS workshop at AEC Youth Assembly July 2003
- work with the Catholic Students' Movement at the UWI Campus in St Augustine
- workshop on Catholic Social Justice Teaching at Youth Leadership Training Weekend at Emmaus Centre in Dec. 2003
- organised by the Youth Secretariat. Ms James, Ms Best and Mr Trestrail were involved in running the workshop.
- workshop at the Northern Vicariate Youth Rally in November 2003
- retreat held in Matura in October 2003 for members of this Youth SC in November 2003. At this retreat this SC drew up a plan of action. Members were assisted by Fr Christian Chambers.
- workshops in schools in Laventille, in collaboration with Fr Christian Chambers.

k) CHILDREN & YOUTH AT RISK STANDING COMMITTEE

Recently CCSJ organised a meeting on “Children and Youth at Risk” to which major stakeholders involved in the running of Catholic homes/institutions were invited. Invitees included individuals from relevant Government Ministries, some of which sent representatives to the meeting.

As a result of that meeting, it was deemed important to establish a new SC on CCSJ. Sr Arlene Greenidge, from St Dominics’ Home, is the Chair of the new SC entitled: “Children and Youth at Risk”. As stated above, it was agreed that Ms Best, CCSJ’s Research Assistant, will assist in gathering information and in supporting Sr Arlene in this area of work.

In March 2004, this SC embarked on a survey that will form the basis for a database on this topic. Questionnaires have been sent to all Catholic-run homes/institutions for completion and return to CCSJ before the first week of April.

Ms Best will contact the homes/institutions to enquire whether they wish support in completing the questionnaire. If they do, then Sr Arlene, Ms Best and 2 UWI students who are on practicum at St Dominics will assist. Once the information is collated, this SC plans to run a seminar on the needs of homes/institutions and of children/youth in these homes, particularly in light of the proposed Children’s Authority.

PHASED WORK: The work of the following 2 Standing Committees will be phased in over the coming year:

l) CONSUMER RIGHTS AND PROTECTION STANDING COMMITTEE and

m) THE ENVIRONMENT/ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

CONCLUSION

CCSJ faces many challenges. However, members are committed to pursuing CCSJ’s vision and mission. There is much to be done and members pray for God’s guidance in all that they do. It is hoped that during the course of this year CCSJ will be able to mobilise support at parish level so that local people can be empowered to identify and address social justice issues themselves, with CCSJ playing more of an advocacy role.

The Chair’s plan to arrange to speak to priests at Vicariate meetings and to address members of the Council of Priests on issues relating to CCSJ’s work, should assist the Commission in its attempt to mobilise support in parishes.

CCSJ will continue its efforts to collaborate with others and to mobilise people for progress in social justice and to encourage our Government and statutory agencies to play their role in the process of promoting social justice in T&T and of raising the quality of life for all our people. Action for social justice requires increased local responsiveness by statutory agencies to the communities serve. We will continue to strive to advocate for structures, attitudes, systems and budgeting that will produce responsive services.

The Chair wishes to record her gratitude to all members of the Commission, its Standing Committees, all Resource Persons and Link Persons for their unstinting support of the Commission's work. Most of all, CCSJ wishes to thank His Grace who has been a source of insight an inspiration to us all.

CCSJ's motto is "The Way Forward Together". It is hoped that, with God's help, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, we will all forge ahead together to make justice, peace, love, truth and freedom a reality in our nation and in our world.