



## *Catholics in the Lord's vineyard*

**CCSJ'S 15<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:**

**THURSDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2019, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.**

**ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE, 27 MARAVAL ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN**

**As we work in  
the Lord's Vineyard ...  
Always ask what can I give,  
not what can I get**



**“IF YOU WANT PEACE, WORK FOR JUSTICE” (BLESSED POPE PAUL VI)**

# CCSJ's 15<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THURSDAY 21 February 2019 (covering period 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2017)

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**CCSJ'S 15th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - covering Jan to Dec 2017**  
**Held on Wed 20 Feb 2019**

**CCSJ's Prayer for Justice and Peace**

O God, open our hearts to the gifts 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:**

- 5:30 p.m. Opening prayer, welcome and apologies for absence: Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ
- 5:40 p.m. Minutes of CCSJ's AGM for period Jan to Dec 2016 held on Wed 22 November 2017 & Matters arising from Minutes
- 5:50 p.m. Presentation of Annual Report on CCSJ's work in 2017: CCSJ's Chair
- 6:10 p.m. Adoption of Annual Report and Questions/comments
- 6:15 p.m. Treasurer's Report & Audited Accounts for 2017
- 6:25 p.m. Appointment of Auditors
- 6:30 p.m. Election of Officers/Management Committee - See By Laws: 7.1 (Chair, Deputy Chair, Treasurer, Secretary)
- 6:40 p.m. Closing Prayer and refreshments.

## **1. CCSJ'S VISION**

We envision a transformed national/world community where Justice, Peace and Love prevails, as divinely ordained by God, and which

- ensures human rights, duties and human dignity
- celebrates diversity and promotes equality
- promotes the common good, respect for human life and ecology justice

## **MISSION**

The CCSJ is grounded in the Biblical concept of Social Justice and Catholic Social Teaching and is challenged by the Mission of Jesus to bring about a New World Order based on truth, love, justice, peace and freedom.

Our mission is to be a fearless and unified voice to eradicate social injustice in T&T and in the world, a voice infused with Gospel values that will awaken the social conscience of all citizens and create an empowered population so that all can be active participants in bringing about the Kingdom of God here on earth. We strive to do this through

- Social Justice Education and Advocacy
- promoting people-centred development, and
- working for the transformation of inequitable structures and systems.

## **CORE VALUES**

- We recognise our duties and obligations to the wider community
- “To bring good news to the poor, liberty to captives, new sight to the blind, and to free the downtrodden”. (Luke 14)
- Always respecting the dignity of the human person
- We value the process of Reflection, Research and Action.

## **2. INTRODUCTION BY CCSJ'S CHAIR**

“A world of justice and peace cannot be created by words alone and it cannot be imposed by outside forces: it must be desired and must come about through the contribution of all. It is essential for every human being to have a sense of participating, of being a part of the decisions and endeavours that shape the destiny of the world.” Pope St. John Paul 11

CCSJ is please to present its annual report for 2017. The Theme for CCSJ's AGM, which covers activities undertaken during 2017, is: **“Catholics in the Lord’s vineyard”**

### **MEMBERSHIP OF CCSJ DURING 2017:**

- Leela Ramdeen, Episcopal Delegate/Chair of CCSJ
- Annette des Iles, Vice Chair
- Nadine Bushell, Secretary
- Annette McKenzie, Treasurer
- Sr Roberta O’Flaherty, member
- Jo-Ann Taylor-Smith, member
- Joseph Timothy, member (from Sept 2017)
- Dianne Wells, member

CCSJ members record our thanks to Lorna Chee-Wah and Cheryl Wallace, CCSJ's Administrative Assistants, who, through a job-share, provide tremendous support to the Commission. I would also like to thank all members of CCSJ most sincerely for their commitment to the social imperatives of the Gospel. We thank also all those persons and organisations that have contributed to the Commission's work, and to His Grace, Archbishop Joseph Harris, for his leadership.

### 3. REFLECTION ON CCSJ'S AGM THEME:

#### *Catholics in the Lord's vineyard*

3.1 As well as being Catholics working in the Lord's vineyard, Pope Francis has said that "we must **be** the Lord's vineyard in every environment, even the more distant and challenging ones... let us invoke the intercession of the Most Holy Mary, so that she may help us to be everywhere, in particular in the peripheries of society, the vineyard that the Lord planted for the good of all and to bring the new wine of the Lord's mercy." (Angelus, 8 October, 2017).

To truly understand what it means to work in the Lord's vineyard, let's focus on the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16) in which workers are called by the vineyard owner to work in his vineyard at different hours of the day but are all given the same pay. On Sept 21, 2008 Pope Francis said: "...the equal reward represents "eternal life, a gift that God reserves for all." Further, the parable is about being called, "being able to work in God's vineyard, putting oneself at his service, collaborating with his work." Being called by God is itself a form of compensation. But those who work only for payment, Pope Benedict said, "will never realize the value of this inestimable treasure."

"In today's evangelical page (Cf. *Matthew* 20:1-16) we have the parable of the labourers called for the day, which Jesus recounts to communicate two aspects of the Kingdom of God: the first, that God wants to call all to work for His Kingdom; the second, that at the end He wants to give all the same recompense, namely, salvation, eternal life.

"The householder of the vineyard, who represents God, went out early in the morning to hire a group of labourers, agreeing with them a salary of one denarius for the day: it was a just salary. Then he went out again in subsequent hours — he went out five times that day — until the late afternoon, to take on other labourers that he saw unemployed. At the end of the day, the householder ordered that one denarius be given to all, also to those who had worked a few hours. Naturally, the labourers taken on first lamented, because they saw themselves paid the same way as those who worked less. However, the householder reminded them that they received what had been agreed. If then, he wished to be generous with the others, they mustn't be envious.

“In reality, this “injustice” of the householder serves to cause, in the one listening to the parable, a jump of level, because here Jesus doesn’t want to speak of the problem of work and the just salary, but of the Kingdom of God! And this is the message: there “are no unemployed in the Kingdom of God, all are called to do their part; and at the end there will be for all the compensation that comes from divine justice — not human, fortunately! –, that is, the salvation that Jesus Christ acquired for us with His Death and Resurrection; a salvation that’s not merited, but given, by which “the last will be first, and the first last” (*Matthew* 20:16).

“With this parable Jesus wants to open our hearts to the logic of the Father’s love, which is free and generous. It’s about allowing ourselves to be amazed and fascinated by God’s “thoughts” and “ways,” as the prophet Isaiah reminds, which are not our thoughts and are not our ways (Cf. *Isaiah* 55:8). Human thoughts are often marked by egoism and personal gain, and our anxieties and torturous ways are not comparable to the wide and straight ways of the Lord. He uses mercy – don’t forget this: He uses mercy –, He forgives widely, is full of generosity and goodness, which He sheds on each one of us, opens to all the boundless territories of His love and His grace, which alone can give to the human heart the fullness of joy.

“Jesus wants to make us contemplate the look of that householder: the look with which he sees each one of the labourers waiting for work, and he calls them to go to his vineyard. It’s a look full of care, of benevolence; it’s a look that calls, that invites to rise, to get on the way, because He wants life for each one of us, He wants a full, committed life, saved from emptiness and inertia. God doesn’t exclude anyone and wants each one to reach his fullness. This is the love of our God, of our God who is Father.

“May Mary Most Holy help us to receive in our life the logic of love, which frees us from the presumption of meriting God’s recompense and from a negative judgment on others.”

3.3 Another helpful commentary on this parable in Matthew 20 (1-16) is outlined below – by Deacon Keith Fournier (19.9.2011):

He says that the meaning of the parable is “*missionary and vocational.*” He says: “Working in the Vineyard is symbolic of our Baptismal call to live our lives in the Lord by fully participating in the Church - which is His Body. It is by living in the Church that we are capacitated to participate in the continuing redemptive mission of the Lord. The Church is a seed, sign and beginning of the kingdom, making the kingdom present in a world waiting to be born anew.

“The Catechism of the Catholic Church expounds on the image of the vineyard in these words: "The Church is a cultivated field, the tillage of God. On that land the ancient olive tree grows whose holy roots were the prophets and in which the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles has been brought about and will be brought about again. That land, like a choice vineyard, has been planted by the heavenly cultivator. Yet the true vine is Christ who gives life and fruitfulness to the branches, that is, to us, who through the Church remain in Christ, without whom we can do nothing." (CCC # 755)

“Expressing this identification between the Risen Christ and His Church the Catechism explains: "To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity together into his Son's Church. The Church is the place where humanity must rediscover its unity and salvation. The Church is "the world reconciled." She is that bark which "in the full sail of the Lord's cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world." According to another image dear to the Church Fathers, she is prefigured by Noah's ark, which alone saves from the flood."(CCC#845)

“In December of 1988, on the Feast of the Holy Family, Blessed John Paul II issued an apostolic exhortation to the "Lay Members of Christ's faithful" to call all the faithful into a renewed understanding of the Christian vocation. It was released after a Synod of Bishops which had gathered to consider the lay vocation. The late Pope used this parable of the workers in the Vineyard as the framework within which to address the nature of a lay vocation in the heart of the Church for the sake of the world. He began with these words:



“The lay members of Christ's Faithful people (Christifideles Laici), whose “Vocation and Mission in the Church and in the World Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council” was the topic of the 1987 Synod of Bishops, are those who form that part of the People of God which might be likened to the labourers in the vineyard mentioned in Matthew's Gospel: "For the Kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard" (Mt 20:1-2).

“The gospel parable sets before our eyes the Lord's vast vineyard and the multitude of persons, both women and men, who are called and sent forth by him to labor in it. The vineyard is the whole world (cf. Mt 13:38), which is to be transformed according to the plan of God in view of the final coming of the Kingdom of God.

### **You Go Into My Vineyard Too**

“And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too'" (Mt 20:3-4). From that distant day the call of the Lord Jesus "You go into my vineyard too" never fails to resound in the course of history: it is addressed to every person who comes into this world. In our times, the Church after Vatican II in a renewed outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost has come to a more lively awareness of her missionary nature and has listened again to the voice of her Lord who sends her forth into the world as "the universal sacrament of salvation".

“You go too. The call is a concern not only of Pastors, clergy, and men and women religious. The call is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world. In preaching to the people Saint Gregory the Great recalls this fact and comments on the parable of the laborers in the vineyard: "Keep watch over your manner of life, dear people, and make sure that you are indeed the Lord's laborers. Each person should take into account what he does - and consider if he is laboring in the vineyard of the Lord".

“The Council, in particular, with its rich doctrinal, spiritual and pastoral patrimony, has written as never before on the nature, dignity, spirituality, mission and responsibility of the lay faithful. And the Council Fathers, re-echoing the call of Christ, have summoned all the lay faithful, both women and men, to labor in the vineyard: "The Council, then, makes an earnest plea in the Lord's name that all lay people give a glad, generous, and prompt response to the impulse of the Holy Spirit and to the voice of Christ, who is giving them an especially urgent invitation at this moment.

“Young people should feel that this call is directed to them in particular, and they should respond to it eagerly and magnanimously. The Lord himself renews his invitation to all the lay faithful to come closer to him every day, and with the recognition that what is his is also their own (Phil 2:5) they ought to associate themselves with him in his saving mission. Once again, he sends them into every town and place where he himself is to come (cf. Lk 10:1)".

“You go into my vineyard too. During the Synod of Bishops, held in Rome, 1-30 October 1987, these words were re-echoed in spirit once again. Following the path marked out by the Council and remaining open to the light of the experience of persons and communities from the whole Church, the Fathers, enriched by preceding Synods, treated in a specific and extensive manner the topic of the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world.

“The basic meaning of this Synod and the most precious fruit desired as a result of it, is the lay Faithful’s hearkening to the call of Christ the Lord to work in his vineyard, to take an active, conscientious and responsible part in the mission of the Church in this great moment in history, made especially dramatic by occurring on the threshold of the Third Millennium.

“A new state of affairs today both in the Church and in social, economic, political and cultural life, calls with a particular urgency for the action of the lay faithful. If lack of commitment is always unacceptable, the present time renders it even more so. It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle.

“We continue in our reading of the gospel parable: "And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?'. They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us'. He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too'"( Mt 20:6-7). "Since the work that awaits everyone in the vineyard of the Lord is so great there is no place for idleness. With even greater urgency the "householder" repeats his invitation: "You go into my vineyard too".

“The voice of the Lord clearly resounds in the depths of each of Christ's followers, who through faith and the sacraments of Christian initiation is made like Jesus Christ, is incorporated as a living member in the Church and has an active part in her mission of salvation."

“This parable is an essential reminder that everyone has a calling, a vocation. The word vocation derives from the root word meaning "voice". The Lord speaks to each one of us today and says "You go Into My Vineyard too!". He invites us to hear His call and respond, at every age and stage of our life. We can do this by living our lives in the heart of the Church for the sake of the world.

“This way of living "in Christ" requires what St Paul called a "renewal of the mind". (Romans 12:2) One of the fruits of this renewal will be that we come to see our lives differently because we come to understand the Church in a new and renewed way.

“The Church is a relational reality. The early Christians understood this mystery. "From the wound in Christ's side has come forth the Church, and he has made her his bride." (Origen, commentary on the Psalms) When we live our lives in the heart of the Church for the sake of the world we will truly come to understand this wonderful parable. "For the Church has been planted in the world as a paradise." (Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies)

“Do we? Do we see the Church as Some-One, the Risen Christ truly present in His mystical Body, into whom we have been Baptized and now live? Do we, like those early believers, understand that to belong to Christ is to belong to His Body and seek to bring the whole world into the "New World" of the Church? If not, we

need to ask the lord to open our eyes to see the truth and our hearts to receive it... so we can respond to His invitation to go into the Vineyard as His labourers.”  
<https://www.catholic.org/news/hf/faith/story.php?id=42862>

## How many of us are there in the Catholic vineyard?

According to Catholic News Service, the *Pontifical Yearbook (Annuario Pontificio)*, published in April 2017, shows that the number of baptised Catholics in the world grew 1% in a year. The total number at the end of 2015 was: **1,284,810,000**. The following are the largest Catholic countries in the world:

1. Brazil (172.2 million)
2. Mexico (110.9)
3. Philippines (83.6)
4. United States (72.3)
5. Italy (58.0)
6. France (48.3)
7. Colombia (45.3)
8. Spain (43.3)
9. Democratic Republic of Congo (43.2)
10. Argentina (40.8)

These countries account for almost **56 %** of the world's Catholic population. As the UK Tablet states: “The global Catholic population increased by **7.4** per cent, the Vatican said, between the period between 2010 and 2015. Africa continued to be the continent with the largest percentage growth in Catholics, increasing by 19.4 per cent over the same five-year period. The increase in baptised Catholics in Africa outpaced the growth of the general population.

In Europe, the Americas and Asia, the number of Catholics roughly correlated with the growth or decline of the population of Europe as a whole over the five-year period, according to the Central Office for Church Statistics.

“Of the world's **1.285 billion Catholics**, it said, **almost 49 per cent live in North or South America, including the Caribbean**. Europe is home to 22.2 per cent of the global Catholic population; 17.3 per cent are in Africa; 11 per cent are in Asia; and just under 1 per cent are in Oceania and the South Pacific. At the end of 2015, the annual said, there were 670,320 professed women religious in the world, 415,656 priests, 54,229 religious brothers, 45,255 permanent deacons and 5,304 bishops.

“The numbers for bishops and permanent deacons were the only two of the above categories to experience growth from 2014 to 2015. Potentially stalling a trend of annual growth that began in 2000, the number of priests in the world dropped by 136 during 2015. The increased number of diocesan and religious-order priests in Africa could not make up for the strong drop in Europe, which lost 2,502 priests in one year.

“However, over the five-year period (2010-2015) the number of diocesan priests in the Catholic Church rose, while the number of priests belonging to religious orders fell. The impact on Catholics in the pew is obvious, the Vatican said. In 2010 there were an average of 2,900 Catholics for every Catholic priest in the world; in 2015, the ratio had climbed to 3,091 Catholics per priest.

“As expected, the number of seminarians in the world, the office said, ‘touched a maximum in 2011’ and has since experienced ‘a gradual contraction’. ‘The only exception remains Africa, which for the moment does not seem to be touched by the vocations crisis and can be confirmed as the geographical area with the greatest potential,’ it said.”

It is important that we acknowledge the damage caused by sexual abuse of minors by some members of the clergy worldwide. The healing process will take a long time. We, who are committed to our Faith as Christ’s Disciples, must help to rebuild confidence in our Faith. Let us work and pray for a conversion of hearts and minds.

Within this context, we need to **consider the statistics in our own Archdiocese**. History shows that “the Catholic Church has been in TT since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century when the first missionaries arrived in Trinidad from the Dominican and the Franciscan Religious orders. The first Catholic Church in Trinidad was built in 1591 Capuchin monks worked there from 1618 to 1803. In 1797, Trinidad came

under British control and missionary work continued because freedom of worship was granted to Catholics. In 1818, the Apostolic Vicariate of Trinidad was established, and on 30 April 1850 it was elevated to the Archdiocese of POS in 1850. Constant missionary activity of the Catholic Church only began in 1864 in Trinidad. Only in 1864 did the archbishops begin a serious program of evangelization of the island of Tobago, where other Christian denominations had prospered in the meantime, including Anglicans and Methodists. In the history of the local Tobago Catholic community, Catherine Creigh goes down in history as the first Catholic, baptized on March 5, 1870.”  
<https://www.revolvy.com/page/Catholic-Church-in-Trinidad-and-Tobago>

It is important to note that over the years, there has been a steady decline in the number of Catholics in our Church in TT. In **2000** the population was roughly **26%** Roman Catholic. (<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2006/71476.htm>)

According to the **2011** census there were just under **264,365** or was it **285,671** – see below - Catholics in the country, representing **21.6%** percent of the total population. This is the largest Catholic community in the English-speaking Caribbean.

On Fri Feb 22, 2011, Raphael John-Lall stated in his article in TT Guardian entitled: *Catholic church sees 2011 decline*:

“The **2011 Population and Housing Census Demographic Report** shows that Roman Catholicism was again the largest religious denomination with **285,671** followers, but this represents a decline from a membership of **289,711 in 2000**, a **decrease of 1.4 per cent**. Other religious denominations that experienced decreases in their membership in 2011 were Hinduism, Anglican, Presbyterian/Congregational and Methodist.

The number of persons claiming affiliation to Pentecostal/Evangelical/Full Gospel more than doubled from 76,327 in 2000 to 159,033 in 2011, an increase of 108.4 per cent. The category "none" rose by 33.5 per cent and the "non stated" constituted quite a large number of persons.” <http://www.guardian.co.tt/article-6.2.395965.f7a18acd0c>

The latest statistics show that, the number of Catholics in TT continues to decline, as well as the number of Catholics attending Mass.

**MARCH 2017 ARCHDIOCESE STATISTICS**

No. of active Priests	69
Average age active Priests	56
Clergy over 60 years old	31
No. of Catholics	285,671
Ratio of Catholics/clergy	4,140

No. of Permanent Deacons	17
No. of Deacons assigned to Clusters	11
No. of Deacons assisting Parishes	6

<b>Number of Catholics by Vicariate who attended Mass as a % of total for the Archdiocese</b>		
Northern	13,489	32.71%
Southern	7,525	18.25%
Eastern	7,007	16.99%
Central	4,223	10.24%
Suburban	8,233	19.96%
Tobago	763	1.85%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41,240</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**SUMMARY**

	March 2017	March 2013	March 2012	March 2010	March 2007
Total number of Catholics in Archdiocese ( <b>Source:</b> T&T 2011/2000 Population & Housing Census)	<b>285,671</b>	<b>289,711</b>	<b>289,711</b>	<b>289,711</b>	<b>289,711</b>
Average number of Catholics who attended Mass/Eucharistic Service in the Archdiocese	<b>41,240</b>	<b>46,017</b>	<b>42,769</b>	<b>42,179</b>	<b>48,834</b>

**14%** of the residents of Trinidad & Tobago who identify themselves as Catholic, attended Mass in March 2017 and **86%** did not attend or are sporadic in their attendance. In other words, with approximately **285,671** Catholics in our Diocese, the number of persons attending Masses throughout the Diocese was **41,240**.

It is safe to say that the vast majority of our resources (human, financial, ministry etc.) are being utilized to minister to 14% of our Catholics.

**86%** of our people do not celebrate the Eucharist.

*Four Weekends March, 2017*

Vicariate	Head count	Average Sunday Mass attendance
NORTHERN VICARIATE	53,962	13,489
TOBAGO VICARIATE	3,053	763
SOUTHERN VICARIATE	30,108	7,525
EASTERN VICARIATE	28,033	7,007
SUBURBAN VICARIATE	32,934	8,233
CENTRAL VICARIATE	16,895	4,223

<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>164,985</b>



Catholic News (Sun 13 Jan) reported that Archbishop Jason Gordon commented during his address at the National Conference of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal on the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend of January 2019, on the low Church attendance. “He mentioned that ten years ago, attendance was 17 per cent and last year (2018) **14 per cent**. ‘That’s a trend in the wrong direction,’ he said.”

As we seek to promote the social doctrine of our Church, let us remember that as Disciples of Christ, we also have to address declining numbers. Perhaps this is why Archbishop Jason Gordon said in October 2017 at the press conference to present him as Archbishop Joseph Harris’ successor, that he intends “to restore confidence in the Port of Spain Archdiocese and build a civilisation of love, which is one of the key challenges facing the Catholic Church in TT. In order to properly address issues of crime and corruption, he said, the church must focus its efforts on restoring confidence and discipleship.

“ ‘The two main challenges facing the church today are to first help its people and restore confidence to give themselves to God, what our Holy Father (Pope Francis) calls missionary discipleship,’ Gordon said.

“ ‘Without getting people to come to this deepening discipleship, we cannot face the second issue, which is the turbulence this nation faces with the high crime, high levels of corruption and high levels of discord in the public arena. The greatest challenge is to love God with everything, to love thy neighbour as themselves and to build a civilisation of love.’”  
<https://newsday.co.tt/2017/10/19/gordon-is-new-roman-catholic-archbishop-in-tt/>

At the recent CREDI graduation, feature speaker and CREDI director, Lennox Bernard, stated that today **only 14%** Catholics attend Mass. As numbers decline, we must consider the possible reasons for this decline and address these.

As we seek to build God’s Kingdom of justice, peace, truth, love, freedom, and forgiveness, let us strive to get our priorities right and follow the path that will help us to dispel the darkness and live in the light of the living Lord.

#### **4. TREASURER'S REPORT: AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR 2017**

4.1 Annette McKenzie, CCSJ's Treasurer, will present CCSJ's Audited Accounts for 2017 at this AGM.

The Accumulated Fund balance at 31 December 2017 was: \$360,150 (TT).

Total income decreased from \$228.5K (TT) in 2016 to \$222.2K (TT) in 2017.

Funding from the Chancery remained the same in 2017. In-kind income was generated by CCSJ for the year 2017. This included free services for Audited Accounts, free printing of CCSJ's Newsletters and posters.

CCSJ incurred a deficit in its financial operations of \$13,690 (TT) in 2017.

Salaries and stipends remained stable in 2017.

Overall expenditure remained stable in 2017.

Our Treasurer liaises with L. Dave Lopez & Co., the Firm of Accountants that has been preparing CCSJ's Annual Audited Accounts free of charge since 2014. CCSJ is a Limited Liability Company under the Company's Act.

Mr. Lopez is a Catholic. We wish to record our deep appreciation to Mr. Lopez and his Team for their commitment over the past years to use their knowledge, skills and experience to further the aims of CCSJ, and by extension, the Archdiocese.

**NB:** It is to be noted that although CCSJ's land in San Raphael has been transferred by deed to SVP, CCSJ will not wind up as a Company as yet, since SVP has not been able to achieve success in getting a waiver of Stamp Duty – even though the organisation is a Charity.

**Annette McKenzie, Treasurer**

## **5. SOME MAJOR EVENTS IN OUR CHURCH IN TT IN 2017**

**5.1 Catholic News Digital Archives:** In commemoration of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Catholic News, the Catholic News Digital Archives was formally launched on 17 July 2017 at the Apostolic Nunciature of the Holy See, St. Clair, Trinidad. CCSJ's Chair attended the event.

See: <http://natt.gov.tt/node/219> which states, inter alia, that: “The digital archive was an initiative of the Catholic Media Services (CAMSEL) with financial support from the Holy See/Vatican. The project was completed in collaboration with the National Archives at its Reprographics Lab, using part of its Catholic News collection - 1892 -2012.

“The Catholic News is the Archdiocesan newspaper which started in May 1892 at the Holy Name Convent, #33 St Ann’s Road, Port of Spain (Queen’s Park East). It is Trinidad and Tobago’s oldest newspaper in circulation and the second oldest in the Anglophone Caribbean, after the Gleaner. In 1910 the Catholic News office moved to No. 34 Belmont Circular Road and in 1975 the office and its staff of six moved to No. 31 Independence Square Port of Spain. The first editor was Charles Williams.

“The Catholic News Digital Archives will now give easy and quick access to documentation of 125 years of the life and history of Trinidad and Tobago and of the Catholic and Christian communities. It will be an indispensable tool for both local and foreign researchers.”

**5.2 Announcement of Archbishop-elect:** On 18 October 2017, it was announced that Bishop Jason Gordon, Bishop of Bridgetown, Barbados and Kingstown, St Vincent was appointed by Pope Francis as Archbishop-elect of Port of Spain. He would replace Archbishop Joseph Harris who had resigned in March when he turned 75 years old.

**5.3 Farewell Mass for Archbishop Harris:** On Sun 17 Dec CCSJ’s Chair and some members of CCSJ represented the Commission at the Farewell Mass for Archbishop Joseph Harris – at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

**5.4 Installation of Archbishop Gordon:** On Wed 27 Dec CCSJ's Chair and some members of CCSJ represented the Commission at the Installation of Archbishop-elect, Jason Gordon at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

## **6. REPORT ON OTHER ASPECTS OF CCSJ'S WORK DURING 2017**

**6.1** CCSJ is one of 19 Departments in the Archdiocese of Port of Spain. In keeping with the annual practice, CCSJ submitted its Pastoral Plan for 2017, along with all Departments, parishes, and schools. This plan is available on CCSJ's Website. CCSJ's Chair reported to Members that the budgets for all Departments had been reduced due to the economic downturn. CCSJ's allocation from the Archdiocese for 2017 was TT \$50,000.00 – excluding the salaries of the Chair and the 2 part-time Administrative Assistants (job-share).

With no Parish Link Coordinators, and with a reduced budget for 2017, collaboration with other Departments and organisations allowed CCSJ to optimize the use of its limited resources. Also, CCSJ is grateful for the generosity of a few individuals who continue to lend tremendous support to the Commission - in kind. For example, the cost of all the Newsletters, posters etc. that are provided free of charge to CCSJ would leave the Commission in the "red" if CCSJ had to pay for them. The Company that provides graphic designs and the Auditors who provide their services to CCSJ free of charge are also to be thanked for their unstinting support of the Commission.

CCSJ encourages the Faithful to let the Church's social doctrine guide our path. With no Parish Link Coordinators/ "foot soldiers" on CCSJ, the Commission continues its efforts to raise awareness of the Faithful/Citizens of the social doctrine of the Church, and to encourage them and the wider community:

- to demonstrate our love for God, for our neighbour and for all creation by reaching out in solidarity e.g. to those who are poor/socially excluded and to build the common good;
- to be true witnesses to our faith by integrating our faith with our daily lives. An integral part of our Ministry is a commitment to promote justice:

“The teaching and spreading of her social doctrine are part of the Church’s evangelizing mission. Since it is a doctrine aimed at guiding people’s behaviour, it consequently gives rise to a ‘commitment to justice,’ according to each individual’s role, vocation, and circumstances.” (The Social Concern of the Church, n.41, Blessed John Paul II).

We will achieve our mission if all Catholic organisations partner with each other to:

- protect and promote the sanctity of life and the dignity of each human person (this means being vigilant and speaking out against attempts to liberalize laws that will allow abortions, homosexuality, and striving to abolish the death penalty);
- promote integral human development (the development of all dimensions of a person and of each person);
- act as advocates for the poor and vulnerable, including our children, the differently -abled, and senior citizens;
- strengthen family life, build community and the common good; - promote human rights and meet our responsibilities;
- promote economic justice e.g. by ensuring that the economy works for the people;
- promote participation in the economic, political, social and cultural life of society;
- be good stewards of God’s creation by promoting environmental/ecological justice - recognising that the gifts of the earth that God has given to us is for all to share – including future generations;
- build a nation/world in which truth, justice, love, freedom and forgiveness – the pillars of peace, become a reality.

**6.2 Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan (IPCP):** On September 26, 2016, Msgr. Cuthbert Alexander, Vicar for Communications, sent a letter to all Heads of

Dept/Catholic organisations in the Archdiocese about the establishment of the IPCP team in the Archdiocese. Inter alia, it stated:

“The Antilles Episcopal Commission (AEC) has approved and set in motion the design and planning process for creating an ‘Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan (IPCP)’ for all the dioceses of the AEC region. This is a new kairos prophetic moment for the Caribbean Catholic Church in an expanding new media age.

“I invite you or a representative of your organisation to an introductory meeting on the process that will also help us in the Port of Spain Archdiocese to identify members of an Ad Hoc Committee to work proactively on the plan. The meeting will take place at Camsel, 31 Independence Square, Port of Spain, on Friday, October 21, beginning at 2 p.m.

“The idea of an Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan (IPCP) is ‘inclusive’ of the diverse ministries within each diocese. Pastoral Communications ministry is at the service of the entire diocese. It is imperative, therefore, that a ‘collaborative stance’ be embraced within our Archdiocese to create and support a win-win for all of us.

“The IPCP will operate at two levels: locally in each diocese of the region and regionally – each diocese working together with others in the AEC region. Together across the Catholic Caribbean region, the AEC hopes to identify existing media resources and personnel, discover ways to share/network these expert strengths and identify collaborative initiatives involving both traditional and new media to support our efforts at the Archdiocesan and regional level. Ultimately, the AEC’s IPCP will reflect the diocesan plan, and vice versa.

“This approach is a ‘new way’ of using and expanding our communication resources and technologies within the Archdiocese. This ‘new way’ is solidly rooted in *Aetatis Novae* the official Vatican document for Pastoral Communications. It will help us to identify new approaches that create new models with ‘fresh energy and religious imagination’” (Pope Francis).

CCSJ is a member of the group. From the inception of the Project in our Archdiocese, it was decided that the central theme would be Archbishop Harris’

Pastoral Letter: *Return to Hospitality* and that the Project would be implemented in every Church Ministry.

At an IPCP meeting on 27 Oct., Lisa Bhajan, TCN, gave a progress report which included an overview of the Research Phase > Design Phase > Implementation Phase and Evaluation Phase – setting in motion an active ongoing plan.. There was a discussion of Step 1 of the proposed pilot project i.e. Facebook posts to stimulate conscience and conscious raising re Hospitality theme.

A reporting template was provided – to be used as a guide “to define your project’s structure and methods of information collection, screening, formatting, distribution, and outlines understanding among your project team the actions/processes necessary to facilitate the critical links among people, ideas, and information that are necessary for project success.”

Catholic News stated on 12 September 2017: “The IPCP is intended to be inclusive of the diverse ministries within each diocese. It holds that the pastoral communications’ ministry must be at the service of the entire diocese. The process, which began in September last year, requires that ministries in our Archdiocese and all dioceses in the region embrace a ‘collaborative stance’ to create and support a win-win situation for all.”

**NB:** In the latter part of 2018, a Draft Pastoral Plan was circulated by Archbishop Jason Gordon and Parishes, Departments etc. have been asked to comment on this. See Catholic News article by His Grace in CN on 4 August 2018: <https://catholicnewstt.com/index.php/2018/08/04/moving-towards-pastoral-plan/>

**6.3 Council for Responsible Political Behaviour:** This Council was established to monitor and evaluate adherence to the Code of Ethical Political Conduct by the Political Parties and their Candidates. The Council seeks to encourage moral, lawful and responsible conduct during elections. The Code was conceptualised by Archbishop Joseph Harris and was drafted with input from other religious leaders including Anglican Bishop Claude Berkley and civil society organisations, including Transparency International and the Network of Non-Governmental (NGOs), along with FITUN and the Chamber of Commerce. The Code was launched at the Hilton Trinidad Conference Centre on 25 March 2015.

Signatories to the Code included the Inter Religious Organisation (IRO), Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, the Anjuman Sunnat ul Jamaat Association (ASJA), T&T Chamber of Industry and Commerce, T&T Transparency Institute, Women's Network of NGOs, the T&T Publishers and Broadcasters Association and the Communication Workers' Union.

At the launch, Archbishop Harris said: "We as a people have developed certain habits which are not the best and the code seeks to help us to change those habits and build better habits where politics and canvassing and campaigning are concerned....We don't expect to have 100 per cent compliance immediately, even though I suppose all of that would be welcomed, but we do hope that the code would help us so that ten years from now we could look back and say, 'Yes our political culture has changed.' And not a people who focus on the character assassination but on the projects, the ideas, the philosophy and the development which we all seek for our country."

The code is intended to achieve the following objectives:

- Fostering of democracy through peaceful, free and fair elections, conducted at regular intervals in which voters are permitted to cast their ballots freely, without interference, fear, intimidation or bribery.
- Promotion of respect for human rights, the pursuit of civil and political liberties, the tolerance of divergent opinions, full and active participation of all in the political process.
- Encouraging participation in the electoral process by the People and to uphold their right to make political choices.
- Promoting an election process free from violence.

The Council is a separate entity which was born out of the code. See the following link for a Media Release from the Council, outlining Methods for managing complaints and reporting thereof:  
[http://www.rcsocialjusticett.org/downloads/coepccouncil\\_100415.pdf](http://www.rcsocialjusticett.org/downloads/coepccouncil_100415.pdf)

It should be noted that, in line with the thinking of the Members of the Council, the former chairman of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC), the late Dr.



Herbert Masson, stated that the Code of Ethical Political Conduct should be codified in law. (See Express Sept 8, 2015).

During 2017, the Council held 1 meeting on Wednesday 26th April, 2017. Meetings are usually held in the Boardroom at the Institute of International Relations, UWI, St. Augustine Campus.

The Council issued 2 media releases in 2017:

- Political Parties in Tobago to Sign the Code of Ethical Political Conduct Ahead of THA Polls; dated January 7, 2017
- Bye-elections in the Local Government Districts of Belmont East and Barataria, July 16, 2018; dated June 29, 2018

In January 2017 Dr. Bishnu Ragoonath and Bishop Clive Abdulah went to Tobago and on 9 January, they held a meeting with key personnel from Tobago-based political parties who signed the Code of Conduct.

Current Council Members are:

Chair - Dr. Bishnu Ragoonath

Deputy Chair - Bishop Clive Abdulah,

Secretary - Leela Ramdeen

Member - Bro. Noble Khan

Member - Ramjit Maharaj.

Also on the Council are representatives from the five political parties including:

Ferdinand Ferreira (PNM)

Denisia Forbes (UNC),

Sunil Ramjitsingh (ILP)

Lisa Henzell (Congress of the People) - Resigned June 2018 – Awaiting new representative

Gregory Fernandez (MSJ) - New representative to be appointed.

NB: Recording Secretary to the Council is Jo Anne Lodge – see below.

On Dec 18, 2017, the Council's Annual Return was filed with Companies Registry to fulfill the Council's obligation since it is incorporated as a non-profit Company under the Companies' Act.

By March 2015 all five political parties had signed the code. Since the resignation of Reginald Dumas in 2015, there remains a vacancy for a person who is not aligned to any political party.

It is important to note the Express' report in March 2015: "Asked if the council has the power to impose sanctions, Harris said: 'We have no power to penalise anyone. The council will monitor and evaluate what politicians and parties are doing. People can complain to the council and they will be well within the law. We are evaluating the person or party based on the principles kept. We have no powers to do anything. It has to work through the moral and spiritual suasion of the electorate. The electorate has to ensure the politicians are keeping their word.'

"Harris said they will be embarking upon an education programme for the nation. He said: 'The citizenry can determine if the parties are being true. It is not a religious instrument. It has a lot of civil society groups. The code was intended to stop the downward slide of politics and politicians on the hustings.'

"In a previous interview, Harris had said the code was intended to encourage politicians to behave responsibly and refrain from mauvais langue and non-charitable remarks on political platforms and even during Parliamentary sessions.

"Harris also said they should discuss national issues and not focus on the individual. Asked to share his sentiments on the Council, Dr. Ragoonath said: "At this point in time, we have no power and we have no sanctions. All we could do is utilise moral suasion. We take it to the media and the party that has not been adhering to the Code will be exposed. The individual will also be exposed to the public." Dr. Ragoonath said the code's tenets focus on the need to uphold the Constitution, moral principles and ethical standards, promote and enforce tolerance, respect, harmony and peace, and to refrain from practices that promote divisiveness, especially racist remarks."

During 2017 CCSJ continued to function as the Secretariat of the Council for Responsible Political Behaviour and CCSJ's Chair continued in the role of

Secretary, with Jo Anne Lodge as Recording Secretary. The Council's work continues up to and beyond the Local Government Elections.

The Council was incorporated as a not for profit Company on Dec 15, 2015. Since its inception in 2015, the following have been achievements of the Council (up to 31 Dec 2017):

- Held the Launch of the Council on March 25, 2015 with sponsorship from Republic Bank Limited and Massy Group.
- Printed copies of the Code booklet, Council banner, podium pendant, • Activated a webpage and email address
- Meetings of the Council were held fortnightly
- Deliberated on several complaints from the general public and political party representatives utilizing the judgment of Council members to formulate responses sent out via media statements and letters.
- Issued 9 media releases

Examples of the Council's impact included:

- that a political party candidate publicly stated that they were cited by the Council of a breach of the Code
- the media houses allowed representatives of the Council to appear for interviews
- the entire Code document was published by the print media
- calls from the general public went to the media houses asking for adherence to the Code by politicians
- all the Council's media releases were published or included in the newscasts, achieving the publicity that was expected.

As a result, the Council will continue to use moral suasion to achieve the objectives with which it has been charged. CCSJ's Chair informed members of the Council that due to budgetary constraints in 2016, CCSJ would no longer be able

to meet the cost of the stipend paid to Jo Anne Lodge, the Council's Recording Secretary. CCSJ had paid the sum of \$2,000 per month to her for her services from Jan 2015 to Nov 2015. The Council undertook to seek to raise funds to pay her and she committed to continue performing her duties pro bono until the funds were identified.

In 2016 the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Port of Spain offered to give a grant to the Council for the sum of \$50,000 – to support expenses for the administration of the Council. This sum was deposited into the Council's Bank Account on Oct 18, 2016. The Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (SDMS) also made a pledge of \$25,000 to be used for the administration of the Council. The SDMS contribution was deposited into the Council's Bank Account on Jan 4, 2017. A decision has yet to be made regarding remuneration for our Recording Secretary.

#### **6.4 Promoting a culture of life: Anti-Death Penalty work:**

Catholics believe that pro-life, means pro-ALL LIFE. CCSJ's Chair is also Chair of the Greater Caribbean for Life (GCL), an independent, not-for-profit, regional civil society NGO working towards the abolition of the death penalty.

The English-speaking Caribbean countries all retain the death penalty, although there has not been a hanging since 2008. The last hangings in the English-speaking Caribbean are as follows: Grenada: 1978 - 40 years ago, Barbados: 1984, Belize: 1985; Dominica: 1986, Jamaica: 1988, Antigua and Barbuda: 1991, St Vincent and the Grenadines: 1995, St Lucia: 1995, Guyana: 1997, Trinidad and Tobago: 1999, Bahamas: 2000, and St Kitts & Nevis: on 19 Dec 2008, Charles la Place was hanged in St Kitts and Nevis. Suriname is the last country in the region that has abolished the death penalty - on March 3, 2015.

Even though the Caribbean retentionist states have not carried out any execution for the last ten years, some have sentenced persons to death during this decade. Since the ruling of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in *Pratt and Morgan v the Attorney General of Jamaica* (1993) and following the restrictions contained in a number of rulings in subsequent Privy Council cases, it is now very difficult for these countries to implement the death penalty.

On June 27, 2018, in a landmark judgment, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) ruled that the mandatory death penalty 6 as stated in section two of the Offences

Against the Persons Act (OAPA), Ch.141, for persons convicted of murder in Barbados is unconstitutional.

T&T remains the only English-speaking Caribbean country that retains the mandatory death penalty for murder.

Although our island states are small in the English-speaking Caribbean, the 13 Retentionist countries in the Greater Caribbean basin comprise about 25% of the total votes opposed to the call at the UN General Assembly's sessions in 2007, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018 3, for countries to adopt a resolution to establish a moratorium on the use of the DP with a view to work toward abolition. Most of the Caribbean retentionist states have consistently voted against the resolution and have signed the Note Verbale, dissociating them from the moratorium.

**NB:** It is noteworthy that on November 16, 2018, when the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly considered a draft resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, for the first time Dominica voted in favour of the moratorium resolution and Antigua and Barbuda abstained, rather than voting against it.

From November 12 to 14, a delegation of international experts on the death penalty met in Guyana to “advocate for the abolition of the use of capital punishment” there. Khemraj Ramjattan, Minister of Public Security, stated that the gallows will not be rebuilt in the prison – to replace the one that burnt last year. His personal view is that the death penalty “should be abolished totally.”

The goal of CCSJ is to achieve the permanent abolition of capital punishment in every Caribbean state/the world and to work towards the creation of a culture of respect for the right to life and the inherent dignity of all human beings.

**6.4.1 UK's All- Party Parliamentary Group on the abolition of the death penalty:** On Monday 3 April 2017, CCSJ's Chair met with Hon. Mark Pritchard, Member of Parliament and Co-Chair of the UK's All- Party Parliamentary Group

on the abolition of the death penalty. He was visiting TT for a few days to discuss a number of issues, including the death penalty.

While in TT he held discussions with Government Officials, NGOs and others. In attendance at the meeting on 3 April were: David Robinson, Criminal Justice Advisor at the British High Commission and Maia Hibben, Executive Officer to the Criminal Justice Advisor. CCSJ's Chair had invited Archbishop Joseph Harris to join those gathered and he attended part of the meeting. He was able to express the Church's opposition to the death penalty. CCSJ's Chair also shared with the visitors the 2016 Pastoral Letter on Capital Punishment published by the Catholic Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference in the Caribbean region in September 2016 (see: <http://www.rcsocialjusticett.org/downloads/capitalpunishmentbooklet.pdf>), as well as Media reports of statements made by Archbishop Harris in relation to recent statements by Government Officials and others on the death penalty. It should be noted that the Catholic Church remains among the few religious faiths in TT that oppose the death penalty.

The meeting with Hon. Mark Pritchard and his team was fruitful and facilitated the sharing of useful strategies for the way forward. Hon. Pritchard is sensitive to the fact that he cannot be seen to be 'telling' TT what to do.

**6.4.2 Panel discussion:** CCSJ's Chair also contributed to a Panel discussion on Tues April 4th 2017 at the Faculty of Law, UWI, entitled: *Perspectives on the Death Penalty: Sorting Fact from Fiction*. It was organised by The Faculty of Law, University of the West Indies, St Augustine, in collaboration with the British High Commission and the European Union. It was one of the actions under the European Union Funded Faculty of Law, UWI Project entitled: "*Growing Capacity for Elevating Human Rights in Trinidad and Tobago to International Standards.*"

The discussion was Chaired by Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Dean of the Faculty of Law, UWI, and former President of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights. Panellists were: Mr. Douglas Mendes SC, President elect of the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago; Hon. Mark Pritchard, UK MP and Co-

Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the abolition of the death penalty; and Ms. Jadia Jn. Pierre, Student, Faculty of Law.

In his contribution, Senior Counsel, Douglas Mendes stated that TT is the only country in the Commonwealth Caribbean still adhering to the cyclical, political debate on the death penalty. Inter alia, he said: “The death penalty talk is cyclical and comes around every five years, and those are the facts...The death penalty should not be on the books.”

Hon. Mark Pritchard introduced himself as a “Commonwealth cousin” and warned against using the death penalty as a “quick fix to crime and violence.” He said he would “prefer to see an informed debate before any fast-tracking or changes in the law takes place and to see what is the latest data and statistical and academic analysis globally so that at least any changes or any fast-tracking is done in an informed way.” Media reports on the Panel Discussion can be accessed via the following

links: <http://www.newsday.co.tt/news/0,241929.html> <http://www.trinidadexpress.com/20170405/news/8216death-penalty-talk-happens-every-five-years8217>

**6.4.3** While CCSJ continues to condemn the rise of violent crime in the region and expresses solidarity with victims, we, in keeping with Pope Francis’ teaching on this issue, reject the notion that capital punishment will act as a deterrent in fostering respect for life in our communities. We believe that society has a right to protect itself from persons who commit heinous crimes and offenders must be held accountable.

However, we hold fast to the belief that non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect society from offenders. CCSJ is deeply concerned that action being taken by some politicians in some retentionist countries, including TT, could lead to the resumption of executions in those countries. CCSJ continues to work with others to oppose capital punishment in all circumstances, and continue to call for non-lethal solutions to crime. The death penalty is not part of God’s plan for His children.

**6.4.4 The AEC 2016 Bishop’s Pastoral Letter on Capital Punishment:** CCSJ’s Chair played a key role in producing an initial draft of this Pastoral Letter entitled: *Human Life is Gift from God*. She had been asked by the AEC Bishops in 2016 to produce a draft. She also arranged for the final document to be printed pro bono. It has been widely distributed across the region and CCSJ continues to promote it as a key document in its Pro-Life work. It is available online.

In March CCSJ arranged for a further 300 copies to be printed pro bono for distribution to a few Bishops via the AEC Secretariat.

The AEC Bishops stated in this Pastoral Letter: “We wish to affirm the Church’s teaching in regard to the inherent dignity of every human being. As such, every effort must be made to protect and preserve the sanctity of life... We believe that the protection of society and the common good are assured by a proper functioning justice system that detects and convicts and by a prison system that focuses on rehabilitation...”

“We urge our Governments to strengthen the capacity of public institutions, including criminal justice systems, to address crime and violence; to address the risk factors that contribute to crime, for example: poverty, urban decay, social inequality and exclusion, family disintegration, poor parenting, lack of quality education and employment, poor housing, the proliferation of guns, drugs and gangs in the region, human trafficking, domestic violence, and to employ related preventive measures. We stand ready and urge our faithful and all people of good will to work together to this end...”

“While we oppose the death penalty, we embrace the victims of violent crimes; those who are hurting and grieving for their loved ones who have been killed, at times in the most heinous ways. We urge each parish to establish victim support groups and seek to meet their physical, mental, spiritual, financial and other needs.”

Pope Francis has repeatedly called for the abolition of the death penalty which, he says, “is an offence to the inviolability of life and to the dignity of the human person... there is no humane way of killing another person. The commandment 'thou shall not kill' has absolute value and pertains to the innocent as well as the guilty.”



**NB:** In 2018 the Church closed the “loophole” that existed in our Catechism regarding the death penalty. CCSJ welcomed Pope Francis’ decision to revise the Catholic Church’s teaching on the Death Penalty.

This decision is clearly linked to the Catholic Church’s belief that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of the Church’s social doctrine. It is important to note that a number of other faith communities/Christian denominations are also opposed to the death penalty.

A letter to all Catholic Bishops from the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Luis Ladaria, dated 1 August 2018, includes the new text of the **n. 2267** of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, as approved by Pope Francis. The letter, (see link below), also outlines the development of the doctrine on the death penalty that has taken place in recent times.

<https://zenit.org/articles/pope-francis-decides-to-update-church-catechism-to-assert-church-teaching-against-use-of-death-penalty/>

The revised text, which “centers principally on the clearer awareness of the Church for the respect due to every human life”, reads as follows:

**“The death penalty**

**2267.** Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good.

Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state. Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.

Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that ‘the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person’, and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.”

**6.4.5 15<sup>th</sup> World Day Against the Death Penalty:** On Tuesday 10 October the World observed the 15<sup>th</sup> World Day Against the Death Penalty. The theme was: *Poverty and Justice: a deadly mix*. It aimed at “raising awareness about the reasons why people living in poverty are at a greater risk of being sentenced to death and executed.”

On 10 October, CCSJ partnered with Amnesty International and the TT NGO, RED Initiatives, to host the **Screening of the film, *Songs of Redemption*** to mark World Day against the Death Penalty. The event took place at Alliance Francaise, 17 Alcazar St., St Clair, POS from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The film, *Songs of Redemption*, is filmed in a Jamaican prison and focuses not only on the impact of poverty on the lives of inmates, but on their rehabilitation.

The Director of the film, Miquel Galofre, was in TT and he joined the Panel Discussion after the film was screened. Also on the panel was: Former Commissioner of Prisons, Mr John Rougier, and Mr Gordon Husbands, who retired in 2007 as the Chief Prisons Welfare Officer. In 2007, he assumed the position of Director of a Penal Reform and Transformation Unit at the Ministry of National Security. He has served on the boards of many NGOs involved in corrections, prisoner/deportee reform and re-entry, restorative justice prison programmes and the spiritual and family life of inmates and ex-inmates. Mr Rougier is now a Trustee of Vision on Mission (VOM) and Mr Husbands is a Director of VOM.

The event was well attended and participants contributed well to the discussion. Such events are helpful in raising awareness of the lack of meaningful support for victims of crime; the inhumane conditions of our prison systems in the region; and of the inhumanity of the death penalty.

**6.4.6 Latest research on capital punishment:** It is to be noted that recent International studies and research show that capital punishment does not act as a deterrent, nor does it foster respect for life in our communities.

Since this AGM report is being written in Jan 2018, it is important to note the latest study on this issue. **“Nations that abolish the death penalty then tend to see their murder rates decline**, according to a December 2018 report by the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center, a Washington, DC-based organization that promotes human rights and democracy in Iran. The report examined murder rates in 11 countries that have abolished capital punishment, finding that ten of those countries experienced a decline in murder rates in the decade following abolition.” See further information via the following link:

[https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/node/7288?utm\\_source=dlvr.it&utm\\_medium=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3srVHXDVgMXQ2xpRZhVQsUvwokGtU2-hlDEhGO\\_N2WoaQwgR4oFAGzkvY](https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/node/7288?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3srVHXDVgMXQ2xpRZhVQsUvwokGtU2-hlDEhGO_N2WoaQwgR4oFAGzkvY)

GCL is a member of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty (WCADP) which states: “Since the 1980s, there has been a global trend towards the abolition of the death penalty, a trend which continues to this day. According to Amnesty International, 16 countries had abolished the death penalty in law for all crimes in 1977. Today, two-thirds of all countries (142) are now abolitionist in law or in practice.

“However, the application of the death penalty is inextricably linked to poverty. Social and economic inequalities affect access to justice for those who are sentenced to death for several reasons: defendants may lack resources (social and economic, but also political power) to defend themselves and will in some cases be discriminated against because of their social status...

“In the United States, in 2017, according to the Equal Justice Initiative, **95%** of people on death row have disadvantaged economic backgrounds...a defendant who does not have the financial capacity to hire a private lawyer will have to rely on the free legal aid provided by the government. Such attorneys, however, are often underpaid and unprepared for death penalty cases...Poverty is not solely an economic issue, but rather a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses a lack of both income and the basic capabilities to live in dignity”

See: [http://www.worldcoalition.org/media/resourcecenter/EN\\_2017WorldDayLea\\_flet.pdf](http://www.worldcoalition.org/media/resourcecenter/EN_2017WorldDayLea_flet.pdf) for 10 reasons why the death penalty is used discriminatorily, and often against the poor and should be abolished.

“To date (Jan 2018) 142 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. As Ivan Šimonović, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, stated in 2014: *‘As long as the death penalty exists, there will be a need to advocate against it.’* CCSJ and GCL will continue to be tireless advocates, not only for the abolition of the death penalty in the Caribbean region and worldwide, but also for effective systems to be put in place to reduce crime and to support the victims of crime. States have a duty to protect the common good, but we agree with Pope Francis that they can do so without resorting to lethal means. ALL lives matter!”

**6.5 Report for Ad Limina visit to Rome:** CCSJ submitted a report for use by the AEC Bishops during their Ad Limina visit with Pope Francis in Rome on the activities and projects of the Commission from January to June 2017. Information contained therein is included in this AGM report.

**6.6 Ask Why – CCSJ’s monthly one hour TV programme** on Trinity Communications Network is an integral part of the Commission’s work. It is aired live on Trinity Communications Network on the 4th Tuesday of each month and is repeated on the following Sunday. A DVD of each programme is filed at CCSJ’s Office.

Panellists engage in discussion on various themes/social issues and viewers/listeners have an opportunity to call in and seek clarification/add their views to the themes under discussion.

The programmes, which seek to raise awareness of the topics discussed and of the implications for action by all, are taped and are on offer to parishes/parish groups to facilitate group discussions. These are available to support social justice Ministry in parishes. This is a useful strategy to spread the Good News of the Church’s Social Doctrine to the Faithful and to the wider community.

**During 2017, the following programmes were aired:**

24 Jan.	<b>Theme:</b> <b>"NON-VIOLENCE-A STYLE OF POLITICS FOR PEACE "</b> <b>Pope Francis' Peace Message for 2017</b> <b>Moderator:</b> L. Ramdeen <b>Panellists:</b> Dr. Terrance Farrell, Nicole Gomes, and Nadine Bushell
28 Feb.	<b>CARNIVAL TUESDAY</b> <b>- NO PROGRAMME -</b>
28 Mar.	<b>- NO PROGRAMME -</b>
25 Apr.	<b>Theme:</b> <b>ARCHBISHOP'S " PASTORAL LETTER ON HOSPITALITY "</b> <b>Moderator:</b> L. Ramdeen <b>Panellists:</b> Rhonda Maingot, Foundress, LWC ; Gail Oxley, O.P.
23 May	<b>Theme:</b> <b>" MARY, MIRROR OF JUSTICE "</b> <b>Moderator:</b> L. Ramdeen <b>Panellists:</b> Mona Rahael, Sanctuary of the Holy Family , Rheema Farrell, Catholic Voices, Kyle Dardaine Companions of the Transfigured Chris (CTC)
27 Jun.	<b>Theme:</b> <b>" POPULORUM PROGRESSIO" (THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLES: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Blessed Pope Paul VI)</b> <b>Moderator:</b> L. Ramdeen <b>Panellists:</b> Mikkel Trestrail CTC , Gale Oxley, O.P.
25 July	<b>Theme:</b> <b>" HEARING THE CRY OF THE POOR "</b> <b>Moderator:</b> D inane Wells <b>Panellists:</b> Rhonda Maingot (LWC), Arlene Joseph Mohan (Community Officer, Ministry of Community Development)
<b>AUGUST</b>	<b>- NO PROGRAMME -</b>
26 Sept.	<b>Theme:</b> <b>" THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON DEMOCRACY "</b> <b>Moderator:</b> L. Ramdeen <b>Panellists:</b> Mikkel Trestrail CTC , Michael Logie, Spoken Word Artist – "Called in" piece and Dianne Wells "Called in" piece
24 Oct.	<b>Theme:</b> <b>"A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLES"</b> <b>Moderator:</b> L. Ramdeen <b>Panellists:</b> Rhonda Maingot (LWC), Rheema Farrell, Catholic Voices
21 Nov.	<b>Theme:</b> <b>THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON " THE COMMON GOOD"</b> <b>Moderator:</b> L. Ramdeen <b>Panellists:</b> Mikkel Trestrail CTC , Joseph Timothy, CCSJ & CFC member
<b>DECEMBER</b>	<b>- NO PROGRAMME -</b>

**6.7 Justice, Peace and Community Week (JPCW)** ran from Saturday, October 21 to October 28, 2017. The theme for the week was **A Catholic perspective on the development of peoples**. The theme commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Blessed Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (*On the Development of*

*Peoples*) which was published in 1967. Inter alia, he had said: “Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every person and of all humanity”.

Pope Francis has said that “One major integration that has largely been lost is that of community and the individual”. He said forms of integration we can improve are the solidarity between those who have too much and those who have nothing, and integration of the different systems: the economy, finance, labour, culture, family life, and religion.”

As usual, all Archdiocesan Departments, Catholic Schools and Catholic organizations were encouraged to plan activities to observe the Week, and to use the Prayer Supplement that was produced by Sr Juliet Rajah, Directress of Catechetics, and published in Catholic News for JPCW. CCSJ had circulated to all parishes/Departments and Catholic organisations, a poster on the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy for display

All Parish Priests/Parish Administrators were asked to encourage the Faithful to pray the Rosary during the Week. They were also asked to encourage Youths to lead holy hour in parishes – before Mass. All Catholic Schools were asked to focus on the theme.

See below for the Calendar of Events for the week. The week was launched with an event at St Dominic’s Pastoral Centre Auditorium at St Finbar’s RC Church compound on Saturday, October 21 from 1.30 to 4 p.m. Chancellor, Fr Roger Paponette and Msgr Julien Kabore, Charge d’Affaires, Apostolic Nunciature, and CCSJ’s Chair spoke on the theme. There was also a screening of the documentary: *Warehoused*, which focuses on the plight of refugees at Dadaab, Kenya.

A key event organised by the CCSJ and the Catholic Youth Commission during *Justice, Peace and Community Week* (October 21–28) was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Spoken Word Competition on the theme: **A Catholic perspective on the Development of Peoples** aired on TCN on Friday, October 27.

In March 2017, Pope Francis said that youth should not be afraid to leave their mark on the world: “The Church and society need you.” Our youth are partners in the process of promoting integral human development.

The Competition was open to youth between the ages of 13-21. Detailed rules were posted on CCSJ’s Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/ccsjtt](http://www.facebook.com/ccsjtt). Entrants were asked to submit a video - no longer than three minutes and the video must be relevant to the theme. Registration forms were available via email to: [socialjustice@rcpos.org](mailto:socialjustice@rcpos.org) or videos could be uploaded to YouTube and then shared on CCSJ’s Facebook page. The top twelve participants were selected to compete on a live show on Friday October 27, 2017 on TCN channel 10 from 8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at Living Water, P.O.S., where the winners were announced.

The prizes were: \$2,500 1<sup>st</sup> prize; \$1,500 2<sup>nd</sup> prize; and \$1,000 3<sup>rd</sup> prize.

Episcopal Delegate for Youth, Winston Garcia and I thank Kyle de Gannes, Mark Howell-Paul, Fidelis Iwueke, Serapion Jones, Michael Logie, Ngozi Lucas, Paige McCarthy, Naiyla Nakhid, and Leeum Quan Kep for their powerful pieces.

Naiyla, Kyle and Leeum won first, second and third prize respectively. Naiyla’s poem is included hereunder.

Kyle, second prize winner, raised pertinent questions on which we should reflect e.g. are we going to church with loud mouths and ice cold, closed hearts? Do some of us have ‘HDC – human deficiency of Christ?’

Leeum, 3<sup>rd</sup> prize winner, Left right left right left right left right left right – reminded us that “it’s time for a new ideology to shape the development of society...a life in the army of the lord, so we going left right left right praise...”

The poems of the top 3 winners were published in 3 issues of Catholic News. See all 3 at: <https://outlook.live.com/mail/id/AQQkADAwATE2ZjYxLTM5MDYtNWE3Yi0wMAItMDAKABAAq6bJpexBNkWvZuKv9jMEFA%3D%3D>

**Here is the winning poem from Naiyla:**



Naiyla Nakhid, winner of the 2017 CCSJ Spoken Word competition.

All I have are words,  
Swimming around in my mind  
So I am sailing out into this lyrical sea to find  
Where one's emotions flowed.  
In the crests of rhythmic waves,  
Diluting my thoughts to flood a page  
Leaving me with paper drenched in melodic verses  
As the waters of passion surges..... to no end  
And submerges.....me in the depth of inspiration  
Letting words flow from my pen.

I speak on behalf of all the youth  
We hunger for what's right,  
And we thirst for the truth.  
We all have voices and we want to be heard  
So we found refuge in this here spoken word.

The Church keeps wondering  
Deeply contemplating and pondering  
Why she's losing her youth  
When all she sought after was to give them the way, the light, and the truth.



The statistics show that three in every five teens leave the church,  
These three in every five teens are on a brand new search.  
Searching for something real  
Searching for a love so pure to feel.

You see, we no longer have to go to court to meet a judge anymore,  
Nowadays all you have to do is walk through a church door.  
Well if the Church opened up and the people woke up too  
Maybe then they would understand that they are no better than me or you.

All of us are sinners,  
Yes, every...single...one  
But Jesus dying on the cross, well I consider my battle won.  
So just stop for a minute and look  
Yeah, drop that proud scoffed up look,  
Take some time to read the Holy Book  
And in shame, we will hang our head  
Knowing some of the things we once said  
But I am sure we will learn to show love and be humble instead  
Is it that attending church makes you a good person?  
You feel you better than me because you listen to a sermon?

Well hear nah,  
As Catholics we should know who we are  
Nothing but sinners seeking to heal our every scar.  
For the church is a hospital for the broken, the sick and the weak,  
Here we are taught to be kind, humble and meek.  
Now hold up, hold up

You see the three out of five that leave the church,  
On a brand-new search.  
Well they are part of the problem too  
Because instead of staying to worship from ground to steeple  
They give and leave because of people.

Now I have a voice and I want to be heard  
I guess that is why I wrote this spoken word  
To prove that logics are worthy  
But it's like saying you back 'Barça' just cause you brought the jersey.

He died for us  
So why not have faith and just trust?  
Nailed to the cross he said "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do"  
While on his mind he was thinking of me and you.  
He dipped his paintbrush in the colour of glory  
And that is how we became part of this wonderful story.

We all know the quote about giving credit where credit is due  
Well let's say thank you to the one who is right and truer than true  
For he made old things new.  
He made a masterpiece of me and you.

I'll take the weight of your hate on my back  
And use it as armour when I am under attack  
The parts of me that died came back to life  
As soon as I set my focus back on Christ.  
Now I've got one shot at this

So I can't just quit and walk away from it.

**SEE BELOW FOR CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR JPCW 2017:**

DATE & TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
Saturday 21 October 1.30 – 4.00 p.m	<b>Opening Ceremony</b> <b>Speakers : Fr. Roger Paponette, Chancellor; Fr. Julien Kabore, Chargé d’Affaires, Nunciature; Rochelle Nakhid, Living Water Community;</b> <b>Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ.</b>  Screening of Documentary: <b>“Warehoused “</b> <b>The faithful are invited – Free entry</b>	St. Dominic’s Pastoral Centre Auditorium St. Finbar’s R.C. Church Compound Morne Coco Road Diego Martin
Sunday 22 October	<b>All Parish Priests/Parish Administrators are asked to encourage the Faithful to pray the Rosary during this Week</b>	All parishes
Monday 23 October  7.00 – 9.00 p.m.	Leela Ramdeen’s address to those gathered at the Prayer Session at St. Charles RC Church  Organised by Eternal Light Community	St. Charles Borromeo RC Church, Eastern Mn. Rd., Tunapuna
Tuesday 24 October 8:00 – 9:00 p.m.	<b>CCSJ’s Ask Why TV Programme</b> <b>Theme: “A Catholic Perspective on the Development of Peoples”</b> Moderator: Leela Ramdeen	TCN Channel 10 Live Living Water Community Frederick Street, P.O.S
Wednesday 25 October	All Catholic Schools are asked to focus on the theme: <b>“A Catholic Perspective on the Development of Peoples”</b>	All Catholic Schools
Thursday 26 October  6.00 – 8.00 p.m.	<b>VIGIL</b> <b>Theme: “Human Development begins from conception and ends at natural death “</b>  Organised by Emmanuel Community	Emmanuel Community 46 Rosalino Street Woodbrook
Friday 27 October  7:00 – 9:00 p.m.	<b>Youth Event : Spoken Word Competition on the Theme: “A Catholic Perspective on the Development of Peoples”</b>  Schools and parishes: Ages 16 – 25 years  Organized by CCSJ and Catholic Youth Commission	TCN Channel 10 Live Living Water Community Frederick Street, P.O.S
Saturday 28 October	<b>A day of caring: Corporal acts of mercy</b>  <b>All Parish Priests / Parish Administrators are asked to encourage Youths to lead a holy hour in parishes – before Mass</b>	Church of the Incarnation Willet Street Maloney Gardens

## 6.8 CCSJ'S Newsletters:

CCSJ's Newsletter, *Parish Link* is a key resource. It is widely circulated to parishes, Catholic schools, Archdiocesan departments/organizations as well as to some people of other faiths. It is also uploaded on CCSJ's Website and referenced on CCSJ's Facebook page. CCSJ's Introduction to the Newsletters is inclusive, particularly as Pope Francis' has stated that peace building is not the sole domain of Catholics "but is typical of many religious traditions for which compassion and non violence are essential elements pointing to the way of life". Given the many social ills in TT/the world, these documents are useful as a reminder of action that we can and must take to build God's Kingdom here on earth.

**January 2017** : CCSJ shared Pope Francis' Message for the 50th World Day of Peace 1 January 2017. This day was instituted by Blessed Pope Paul VI in 1968. Each year it is celebrated on Jan. 1, which is also the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God. His Theme in 2017 was: Nonviolence: a style of politics for peace, which, he says, is a strategy "based on the primacy of law."

**March 2017** : CCSJ shared Pope Francis' 2017 Lenten Message on the theme: "The Word is a gift. Other persons are a gift". The message has three sections: The other person is a gift; Sin blinds us; The Word is a gift.

\* CCSJ's Lenten Reflections on Key Social Justice Principles were updated since they were last published. There had been a number of requests for extra copies, so the Commission organised for further copies to be printed and circulated. (see website).

**June 2017**: CCSJ shared some key quotations from Blessed Pope Paul VI's 5th encyclical, *Populorum Progressio (The Development of Peoples)* which was published on March 26, 1967, less than two years after the end of the Second Vatican Council. March 26 2017 marked the 50th Anniversary of this prophetic encyclical which calls us to put our love for God and neighbour into action. The encyclical calls us to develop a new humanism and a spirituality of justice. Indeed, it is from this encyclical that CCSJ's Motto originates: "If you want peace, work for justice."

Matthew E. Bunson, Senior Editor, National Catholic Register, states: “Pope Paul VI’s encyclical has proven a lasting source of papal reflection and action because of its central theme of integral development. ... three popes — St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis — have celebrated and applied its teachings to fresh circumstances... From the start of his pontificate, Pope Francis has included integral development as one of the key elements of his vision for Catholic social teaching. *Populorum Progressio* has also provided a framework for several of Francis’ most significant writings, including the post-synodal exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) and his recent encyclical *Laudato Si* (Care for Our Common Home).”

**6.9 CCSJ’s Take-a-Bite series:** A few years ago CCSJ arranged for 5 DVDs to be produced on the following 5 themes:

- Overview of Social Justice: Fr Jason Gordon (now Archbishop of the Archdiocese of POS)
- Human Life and Dignity: Sr Diane Jagdeo (now deceased)
- Stewards of God’s Creation: Dr. John Agard
- Rights and Responsibilities: Leela Ramdeen
- Global Solidarity: Fr Malcolm Rodrigues.

The DVDs were copied and circulated in packs of 5 to parishes as an educational tool. Further copies of the DVDs are available from CCSJ’s Office.

**6.10 Nine Leaflets focusing on various social justice themes** have been distributed over the years and are available at CCSJ’s Office. They seek to raise awareness of the social doctrine of the Church.

**6.11 Facebook and Website** - (<http://rcsocialjusticett.org>): CCSJ records its thanks to Jo Ann Smith who manages CCSJ’s Facebook page and keeps it up-to-date. CCSJ also owes an enormous debt of gratitude to Raymond Syms, who does an excellent job as the Commission’s Webmaster. Feedback from visitors to CCSJ’s social media shows that the Website and Facebook page are valued and provide useful information which aims to strengthen the Faith of those who access them. They are kept up-to-date and the variety of topics covered is of interest to many. Some individuals/organisations continue to seek permission from CCSJ to

use material contained on the Commission's Website. Some of the items that are available on CCSJ's **Website** are as follows:

**6.11.1 Media Releases:** CCSJ continues to produce Media Releases when necessary to address social justice issues in TT/the world. The Media Releases are accessible on CCSJ's Website. CCSJ is often called upon by members of the media for a Catholic social justice perspective on certain issues and has always taken these opportunities to state the Church's position clearly.

In 2017, CCSJ issued the following releases:

**Apr 3** – Focus on human development, not hanging. This release was issued in the midst of high emotions due to the rise in crime and violence in TT and the call by many, including politicians, to take action to resume hanging.

**Nov 24** – CCSJ calls for for community mobilization to end violence against women

**Dec 11** – Be peace-builders

**5.11.2** There are also a number of useful CCSJ documents under the heading: **Special Focus** (<http://rcsocialjusticett.org/2.0/special-focus/> ) . They cover:

- Trafficking in Persons
- Health: Diabetes
- Environment: 3 documents produced by CCSJ on this issue
- Capital Punishment
- Restorative Justice and Parole
- Laventille Devotions 2008,
- Family Life
- Women's issues.

**6.11.3 Weekly articles in Catholic News during 2017:** CCSJ continues to produce weekly articles in Catholic News – focusing on social justice issues. These can be accessed on CCSJ's website. Inter alia, the articles seek to educate the Faithful/readers about the social doctrine of the Church and of ways in which this doctrine can be applied to the situation in TT/the world today. They are a call to

action by all people of goodwill. On a number of occasions all 3 of the main National Newspapers have published articles produced by CCSJ.

**6.11.4 Social Justice Quotations published in Catholic News weekly** – to raise awareness of the richness of the social doctrine of the Church; to motivate readers to educate themselves on this issue; and to assist them to see and analyse from our Faith perspective, and then to act to promote Gospel values. CCSJ wishes to thank Mr. Rene Wihby who remains dedicated to the joyful task of submitting a brief quotation - weekly - on the social doctrine of the Church for publication in Catholic News.

**6.12 Pro-Life work and Mary Care Centre:** Human life is sacred. It is worth recalling the statement contained in the Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), no. 2. “All offenses against life itself, such as murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and willful suicide; all violations of the integrity of the human person...all offenses against human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, degrading working conditions where men are treated as mere tools for profit rather than free and responsible persons: all these and the like are criminal: they poison civilization...and militate against the honour of the creator.”

And our Catechism tells us that: “Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person—among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.” (2270)

CCSJ continues to promote and defend life in all forms and at all stages: from conception until natural death. This MCC Ministry contributes to CCSJ’s pro-life advocacy. Although abortion is illegal in TT, there continues to be a number of back street abortions. The Catholic Church stands for LIFE from conception to natural death. Mary Care Centre is one way to demonstrate that we are prepared to journey with those who face challenges in having their babies.

Other issues that are on the front burner are the death penalty, abortion, human sexuality, assisted suicide, euthanasia and those listed above. CCSJ is committed to build a culture of life. There is an urgent need to promote the fundamental value of



life from conception to natural death. Inter alia, CCSJ's education programmes and pastoral work throughout the Archdiocese aim to raise awareness of the need for each of us "to respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life." — The Gospel of Life (*Evangelium Vitae*), n.5.

Promoting integral human development is the work of everyone. CCSJ continues to maintain vigilance to ensure that our laws against abortion remain intact. The Commission expresses the views of the Catholic Church on prolife issues fearlessly in the market place. Where Draft Government Policies contain clauses/provisions that, from a Catholic perspective, will not help to promote a culture of life or to build the common good, CCSJ works with other faith communities, where necessary, to urge that these clauses and provisions are excised from the Draft Policies.

In relation to the Mary Care Centre (MCC): "The Church, in its commitment to promote and defend life in all circumstances and at all stages, and to promote integral human development, continues to offer opportunities for young women to have their babies and to live in dignity e.g. through the work of MCC, a sanctuary in Woodbrook for unmarried, pregnant, young women. "MCC was founded in 1980 by the late Archbishop of Port of Spain, Reverend Gordon Anthony Pantin, in his concern for and commitment to the preservation of life. On 22 June 2011, MCC was rededicated by the then-Archbishop, Edward Gilbert. The spiritual, physical and psychological needs of young women at MCC are nurtured towards self-development and growth.

MCC is a non-profit organisation funded by donations received from the private and public sector. "The Centre opens wide its door to young, pregnant, unmarried women from throughout the region regardless of their background or religious beliefs and tries to impart to them that the value of life is sacred. The following is a report from MCC for 2016: "All staff at Mary Care Centre (MCC) continue to maintain the objectives of MCC which are two-fold:

\*To provide a safe and secure environment for the pregnant mother to give birth to her child.

\*To enable the young mother to be employable at the end of her stay at the Centre."

The young women are usually brought to MCC through recommendations, by the Community Police and Social Workers.

MCC reports that **during 2017, 4 young women were housed** at Mary Care Centre. All had their babies but only 3 remained at the Centre.

CCSJ wishes to affirm Deborah and her team at MCC for their dedication and commitment to this important area of pro-life work. The MCC Team faces many challenges but do so joyfully to build God's Kingdom here on Earth.

**6.13 CCSJ's Calendar for 2017** was printed and circulated before the New Year. It focused on the theme: *Responding to God's call to Holiness*. CCSJ's Calendar is always used as a teaching moment and is displayed in homes and offices of Catholics and in those of some persons of other faiths.

The Commission sees this as an innovative way to communicate the teachings of our Church. This year Calendar sought to raise awareness of Pope Francis' words of encouragement to everyone to become saints and to support one another as we journey along the path of holiness. The script read:

"Holiness is gifted to us by the Lord Jesus, when He takes us up with Him and clothes us in Himself, making us like Him ... holiness is a gift that is offered to all, without exception, so that it constitutes the distinctive character of every Christian... We are all called to become saints!...Do not be discouraged to travel this road. God gives you the grace to do so...all that the Lord asks, is that we are in communion with Him and serve others... Be holy by becoming a visible sign of God's love and His presence beside us... let us support one another, because we do not travel the path to holiness by ourselves" (Pope Francis).

**6.14 Some examples of collaboration with others**, including Archdiocesan Departments, Parishes, Schools, Government Ministries, NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, regional and international organizations, the Media etc.:

To achieve CCSJ's goals, collaboration with others is essential. There is strength in unity. However, collaboration with certain groups/organisations is limited at times due to the values that underpin the work of some organisations. So, for example, while some religious groups oppose abortion, they support the death penalty. CCSJ

uses every opportunity to promote and defend life at all stages and in all circumstances.

CCSJ participates in/responds to national consultations related to social issues in an effort to share Catholic Social Teaching and to ensure that these morals and principles are included in national policy – for example, on Restorative Justice, Local Government and so on.

CCSJ promotes a Catholic perspective on Pro-Life, which, means that human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception to natural death. We believe that "the inalienable right to life of every innocent human individual is a constitutive element of a civil society and its legislation." (Catholic Church's Catechism: 2273).

**6.14.1** Given the current situation faced by refugees, CCSJ supported the UN Information Centre (UNIC) and Living Water Community by attending the screening of the feature Documentary, *WAREHOUSED* – on Sat 8 July. This powerful documentary highlights “the plight of long-term refugees across the globe through an intimate glimpse into daily life at Dadaab, Kenya -- the world’s largest refugee camp.” CCSJ hopes to show this Documentary to a wider audience at the launch of the Archdiocese’s Justice, Peace and Community Week in October.

**6.14.2** CCSJ participates in/responds to national consultations/meetings related to social issues in an effort to share Catholic Social Teaching and to ensure that these morals and principles are included in national policy – for example, on Restorative Justice, Local Government and so on. CCSJ takes the opportunity to work collaboratively with others, both within the Archdiocese, and in the wider community.

**6.14.3** During 2017, CCSJ’s Chair participated in a number of radio and TV programmes to discuss local and global social justice issues. For example:

**6.14.3.1** On 1 Feb CCSJ’s Chair participated on a 2 hour Radio Programme on Isaac Radio 98.1, a Christian Broadcasting Network. This was a 3 member Panel Discussion which included the well-known Seventh Day Adventist Pastor Clive

Dottin. The Theme of the programme was: *Finding Solutions (to the many social ills that beset TT)*. Since it was a call-in programme, listeners were able to participate and share their views on the theme.

**6.14.3.2** On Monday 30 October, CCSJ's Chair was interviewed by journalist, Andy Johnson, about the theme for Justice, Peace and Community Week, and in particular, the obstacles to integral human development. The half hour programme was taped by TCN and aired at a later date. It was also played on **Power 102.1 (Radio)** on Sun 5 Nov during Andy's weekly programme.

**6.14.3.2** On 21 Feb and 6 March, CCSJ's Chair was interviewed on TV6 (CNMG), Radio 95.5 and Radio 102.1 to discuss gang prevention/solutions to the adverse impact that gangs continue to have on TT's society.

**6.14.3.3** Feedback from the radio and TV programmes referred to highlights the fact that CCSJ's input is always valued. Since Catholics are still the largest faith community in TT, the media often call upon Catholics for responses to various issues. Given the crime rate in TT, CCSJ is often called to share the Church's views on the way forward.

An essential element of the SEE/JUDGE/ACT principle involves raising awareness of everyone of the reality that faces us, ways in which we can use the tenets of our faith to inform what we see and to guide us as to what we should do. CCSJ is guided by the words in documents such as *Nostra Aetate*, that the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in other religions. Since TT has an Inter-Religious Organisation and people of various religious persuasions co-exist in TT, it is important for CCSJ/the Church work with these religions to build the common good. CCSJ seeks to do this while remaining true to the tenets of our own faith.

**6.14.4 Non-Violence Begins With Me** : CCSJ has joined the *Movement for Non-Violence Begins With Me* – a not-for-profit, non-denominational and a-political group. It comprises diverse individuals and groups in Trinidad. Living Water Community takes the lead on this initiative which aims to popularise this message and to reduce violence in TT– one person at a time, one family at a time, one community at a time.

**6.14.4.1** CCSJ members participated in public initiatives relating to this Project - including: 40 Hours of Prayer/40 Days of Action which commenced in March. The Days of Action were focused on raising the level of awareness of violence in ourselves and educating the public about how to live non-violent lives. There were many activities organised by the Movement and other groups, including candlelight memorials in communities across the country for victims of violence, daily non-violence awareness podcasts, and sessions with young people and other groups.

The 40 days culminated on Sunday April 16, Easter Monday with a Peace Rally and concert at the Queens Park Savannah, from 2-5 p.m. The feature speaker at the Rally was American peace activist, trainer and author “Kit” Evans-Ford, who survived a violent assault, she told her story and gave advice on how to live a non-violent life.

**6.14.4.2** On Sun 1 October, CCSJ’s Chair was asked by Living Water Community to represent the Catholic Community at an **Interfaith Gathering** in support of the UN International Day of Non-Violence (2 Oct) at LWC. The theme was: *Be Light*. Representatives from various Faith Communities participated in the Service, together with a number of performers.

Inter alia, CCSJ’s Chair said: “We cannot afford to be indifferent as we face the onslaught of violence. We all know what the Lord wants of us. We can be more than we are. We were not made for violence. So let all of us who hunger and thirst for justice and peace become true agents of non-violence. As we recommit ourselves today to the Gospel of non-violence and peace, let us proclaim loudly and clearly that we will be LIGHT; we will allow the Light of the World to shine in and through us. And, as the US Bishops said in their 1994 Pastoral Letter entitled: *Confronting a culture of violence: A Catholic framework for action*: “Let us hear and act with new urgency on the words of Jesus: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called children of God.’”

The Project continues with more and more individuals/families making the pledge to live non-violent lives and to promote non-violence

**6.14.5 Domestic violence Forum:** On Saturday April 22, CCSJ’s Chair Chaired a Forum on Domestic Violence (DV) - held at Holy Trinity RC Pastoral Centre and

organised by Attorney-at-Law, mediator and child rights advocate, Hazel Thompson-Ahye. Speakers at the Forum included the parish priest, Fr Dexter Brereton, Ms Thompson-Ahye; Ms Anna Maria Mora, Educator and Counselling Psychologist; Mme Justice Halcyon Yorke-Young, temporary Judge of the Family Court of TT; and Corporal Curtis Price, Community Police Officer.

In 2004 Dianne Mahabir Wyatt, Chair of the Coalition against DV, said that “TT is regarded as the domestic violence capital in the region.” DV continues to plague the lives of many in TT and CCSJ strives to address this issue at all levels.

**6.14.6** On Saturday 18 Nov., CCSJ held a *Day of Caring* at the Church of the Incarnation, Maloney Gardens - the day before Pope Francis' first World Day of the Poor. CCSJ Member, Dianne Wells, played a major role in organising the Day. Thanks also to Joseph Timothy who joined Dianne and CCSJ's Chair on the day. When Joe saw that only a few persons were trickling in to take advantage of what was on offer, he took some flyers and went to the nearby Mall to distribute them and to encourage people to attend the event.

CCSJ thanks the following agencies that partnered with us to engage in outreach work in the community:

Lions Club - Vision Testing; Ministry of Community Development - sharing information about the various services/courses that are available free of charge; TTARP - encouraging persons who are 50 - years or over to take advantage of e.g. social activities, health benefits, discounts at over 300 merchants ; NALIS - raising awareness of Computer Literacy Classes for Seniors at the local library; Diabetes Association - Managing Lifestyle diseases; CCSJ (Dianne, Joe and I) - raising awareness about the Church's Social Justice Principles.

It was fortuitous that the event was held the day before the first World Day of the Poor. At the end of the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis initiated the World Day of the Poor. The theme for this first year is: *"Let us love, not with words but with deeds"* (1 Jn 3:18). Let us take his advice, open our hearts and share "with the poor through concrete signs of solidarity and fraternity...At the heart of all the many concrete initiatives carried out on this day should always be prayer...This new World Day, therefore, should become a powerful appeal to our consciences as believers, allowing us to grow in the conviction that sharing with the poor enables

us to understand the deepest truth of the Gospel. The poor are not a problem: they are a resource from which to draw as we strive to accept and practise in our lives the essence of the Gospel."

**6.14.7 Information Session at US Embassy:** On Friday 17 Nov., CCSJ's Chair attended an information session at the US Embassy's Public Affairs Section, Briar Place, Sweet Briar Road, St Clair, to listen to a US Expert, Mr Mohammed Fraser-Rahim, speak on the theme: "*A community approach to countering violent extremism.*" The session was Chaired by Michael Barrera, Asst. Public Affairs Officer at the Embassy.

The Embassy had arranged similar meetings with various groups. IRO members had been invited to the meeting at which I was present. Sadly, there were only 2 members present – including me. Fr Martin Sirju is the Catholic representative on the IRO but he had informed His Grace that he was unable to attend. His Grace asked me to represent the Archdiocese at the event. The main concern expressed at the meeting related to fears of violent action that may be taken by ISIS "returnees".

**6.14.8 Speeches and presentations:** CCSJ continues to take every opportunity to address gatherings when invited to make presentations. For example:

- on International Women's Day, March 2017, CCSJ's Chair addressed the Alumni of Holy Faith Convent, Couva, on the theme: "*Women who lead. The Holy Faith Factor.*" All speeches and presentations are accessible on CCSJ's Website and permission is often sought by others to use these or extracts from them. This is another way in which CCSJ seeks to spread the Good News.

- on Wed 15 November, CCSJ's Chair attended Holy Faith Convent, Couva to speak to 6<sup>th</sup> Form Students about key social justice principles. There were about 140 students present. From the questions that some students raised with her "privately" afterwards, it is clear that there are a number of justice issues that affect our students.

**6.15 Archbishop Harris' Petition re prisoners on remand:** Although the Authorities have not addressed this issue, CCSJ continues to keep this Petition on

the “front burner”. Now that Archbishop Jason Gordon has succeeded Archbishop Harris, he is championing this cause, as well as other issues relating to our prisons.

In April 2016, His Grace led a petition seeking to “free” remand prisoners who have been behind bars longer than the maximum prison term they would have gotten if they had been found guilty of their crimes.

The Guardian report on April 25 2016 helps to contextualize this social justice issue: “The petition which has been circulated to priests and parish administrators across the country recently aims to attract sufficient signatures to trigger mercy for hundreds of prisoners, particularly those charged with minor offences. A remand prisoner is one who has been charged with an offence but is awaiting trial. Many of them are on bail but are unable to meet the requirements to obtain bail.

“2016 has been declared the ‘Jubilee Year of Mercy’ by Pope Francis and it is in this context that Harris was seeking Presidential Pardon for some incarcerated on remand. In a letter sent to priests and parish administrators dated April 7, Harris informed his clergy that he had written to the government with the request and asked that the priests read a letter which he sent to the congregation to “sensitise their parishioners about this cause.” He has also asked that parishioners sign forms “endorsing this petition and return them to Archbishop’s House between Pentecost and Corpus Christi.” That is between May 15 and May 26. The letter was read out in some Catholic churches last weekend and parishioners were asked to sign the petition as they were leaving.

“But the response was ‘mixed.’ Some parishioners said they needed time to ‘think about what was being asked of them.’ But many others were in support of the initiative, expressing the view that it was only right that we be ‘merciful’ to those in need of it. ...the letter from Harris came out of a meeting of the clergy at which he is said to have expressed concern that there are several young men and women who have been in prison for years, in some instances more than a decade awaiting their matters being heard, and when their matters are heard, he said, some of them may be sentenced to an additional five years in prison.

“Harris argues that by ‘no fault of their own’ these young men and women would have already spent significantly more time than the sentence imposed, and in this year of mercy he believes that having already served their time once the sentence is



passed they should be allowed to go free...the clergy found the initiative to get parishioners to sign the petition as 'a favourable thing to do,' since it was felt it 'concretised the year of mercy' in this jurisdiction. It was felt that given the slow pace of criminal justice in the country it was 'inhumane' for people who had committed minor crimes to be in prison waiting more than ten years to get a trial.

"Harris said the Catholic Church is a 'Corporate citizen in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago' and desires a 'national reconciliation among our people,' and in this year of Mercy it desires from the Lord for our country 'a national proclamation of mercy.' Harris is asking the authorities that a 'review be undertaken of those who are serving prison sentences and who are found to be worthy of pardon and mercy, be granted their liberty,' and that 'those charged for minor offences and have been held in remand for a long time, some of whom if and when sentenced would have already served that time in remand, that similar consideration of mercy may be afforded them.'

"Former attorney general Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj said the country is on the 'verge of having a broken criminal justice system.' Maharaj said it was unacceptable that people are in prison charged for bailable offences but are unable to get bail because they come from 'families who live below the poverty line and cannot afford it. That is unacceptable,' he said. He said that is tantamount to 'them pleading guilty and serving time and when their matter is tried and they are sentenced they have to serve time again, that is an injustice.'

"AG: Welcome initiative Contacted for comment

"Attorney General Faris Al-Rawi told the GML Enterprise Desk that the government 'welcomes the support of his Grace in this very critical venture and we welcome his concern.' The AG said he had raised similar concerns at the recent consultation on the prison system in T&T. **It costs the state almost \$50 million a month to maintain the 2,235 prisoners in remand yard.** He questioned then 'how is a poor man with no land able to get bail? Does he stay in jail for a longer period of time for obscene language or maintenance, or is it time we accept cash deposits?'

"He said there are over 2,000 prisoners on remand yard and there is need to disaggregate between crime and sentences, the issue of clearing the backlog of

cases and those languishing in the prison system ‘we intend to deal with the issue head on.’ Several factors would, however, have to be taken into account he said including a thorough analysis ‘and recommendation by the Director of Public Prosecutions in appropriate cases where pardon may apply.’ Obviously he said it will not apply to those charged with serious crimes and murder. For those whom it may apply, he said, process must be followed this involves ‘the Mercy Committee, and recommendations from the DPP. But ultimately he said ‘His Grace is in sync with the government on the issue.’

“Breakdown of prisoners

“There are currently **2,235 people on remand yard** that is **just over 60 per cent of the prison population** which currently stands at over **3,400**. A breakdown of remand yard prisoners indicate that 42 per cent of the prisoners are on murder charges, that calculates to 939, 11 per cent or 246 persons are on drug possession charges, 7 per cent or 156 people have been charged with sexual offences and 12 per cent or **268 people have been charged for lesser offences including child maintenance and traffic offences**, coming to a total of 1,609 prisoners. Some 28 per cent of remand yard prisoners or 625 were unaccounted for in the statistics. **Al Rawi said many of these inmates have been in prison for over 10 years in some cases 11 and 15 years waiting for their matters to be heard.** He said it costs \$20,000 to \$25,000 a month to maintain someone who may not have been able to pay a \$12,000 fine, “it’s like bouncing a rubber ball off a concrete block” he said.

“In addition he said the state spends **\$80 million dollars a year moving remand yard prisoners to and from courts across T&T**. The estimated cost includes having a prosecutor assigned to each case, a police officer, health costs and others. If the 12 per cent on lesser offences 64 were to benefit from the request by the Catholic Church that would be roughly 270 prisoners, there would be a saving of \$6.75 million per month. Al Rawi had told the national consultation on prison reform that ‘every single dollar matters in our country, there must be value for money considerations.’ He said he was ‘pleased that someone other than the Government is looking at this way forward. This is not impossible to achieve, I am pleased his Grace is thinking the same way we are.’”

On April 29, the Guardian shared the direct link to the petition site and stated: “The Roman Catholic Church wants the wider national community to have its say

on the call by Archbishop Joseph Harris for provisions to be made by the Government to pardon deserving prisoners, especially those incarcerated and awaiting trial for periods of time longer than what they would have served if found guilty. The petition initially sent out to Roman Catholic churches across the country is now available online to the wider community, both Catholic and non-Catholic...the archbishop has agreed to an online option which would allow anyone wanting to sign the petition to do so. There is an option on the link for people to say whether they want their names to appear publicly or not. Harris is hoping that ‘as many people as possible will sign this petition so that the powers that be may hear the desire of the people to make this land, our home, a more merciful place.’ Meantime, relatives of prisoners incarcerated for minor crimes say they fully support the archbishop’s call which can give ‘new hope to the poor justice system’...”

\*\*\*Sadly, 2016 ended with no concrete action taken by the Authorities to embrace this Petition. Although change may take time, as Catholics, we simply have to continue raising our voices and working in the Lord’s Vineyard. The initiative sparked a national debate on the issue and it is hoped that in the near future action will be taken by those in Authority to address this gross injustice.

**NB:** As stated above, Archbishop Jason Gordon has taken up this issue in 2018 as well as the issue of bail for poor people on remand. This is receiving some support from persons such as Attorney-at-Law, Israel Khan SC.

**5.16 Advocacy** continues to be a key activity of CCSJ and takes a number of forms, including writing letters for individuals, conducting research on social and economic issues on behalf of citizens, collaborating with other organisations to campaign for structural change e.g. by making representations to Government Ministries. CCSJ Members are involved in advocacy work in their parishes and staff at CCSJ’s POS Office seek to address the needs of those to come to the Commission seeking assistance. Members also take the opportunity to share information contained in key documents such as Archbishop Harris’ Pastoral Letter on Hospitality – a key social justice virtue. CCSJ’s advocacy work is based on Catholic values and seeks to create a fair and just society as divinely ordained by God. One in which equity/equality/justice/love/ peace and harmony can become a reality.

## **7.0 CCSJ's land in San Raphael and the TTRF/APRC (Trinidad and Tobago Reintegration Foundation/Anthony Pantin Reintegration Centre)**

CCSJ owns the land in San Raphael on which this facility is built. TTRF/APRC is a Company but its Directors have not met for a few years. CCSJ understands that a number of the Directors resigned before the death of the Chair, Clive Belgrave, who was also CCSJ's Deputy Chair. He died in 2016. CCSJ is unaware of the status of the Company. In 2017 there were 5 persons residing at the Centre. They were all employed full-time and in their spare time they were engaged in an Agricultural Project at the Centre. Produce reaped by residents were sold.

It is to be noted that although Stephen Belgrave had been running the Centre at San Raphael before and after Clive's death, he had no funds to do so once SVP ceased funding the facility. In the end there were only 2 persons at the Centre.

For a number of years, the Centre had supported the rehabilitation of former inmates/prisoners so that they can return to society and live productive lives. Since fewer individuals were seeking support from the Centre, and there was no funding to continue the work there, CCSJ's Chair held discussions with the then Archbishop, Joseph Harris, and Mr Rudolph Boneo, President of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP). Initially, the discussion focused on the possibility of CCSJ executing a lease at a peppercorn rent to SVP to continue the work of the Rehabilitation Centre. In the end, it was agreed that the land would be transferred by Deed of Gift to SVP instead as SVP is "Church" and is involved in promoting social justice in the Archdiocese.

Eventually, SVP made a decision not to continue running the Centre but to use the land for agricultural purposes - to plant food to supply its many Charitable facilities. CCSJ's Chair met with Mr Stephen Belgrave to convey this information to him.

The Deed of Gift was executed and signed by CCSJ's Chair, and CCSJ's Acting Deputy-Chair, Ms Annette des Iles in mid-2017. As at Jan 9<sup>th</sup> 2019, CCSJ is still awaiting a copy of the Deed stamped by the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Since SVP has charitable status, there should be no need for Stamp Duty to be paid. However, it appears that the delay is linked to the fact that SVP is being asked to pay Stamp Duty of \$40,000 TT. SVP's lawyers are seeking a waiver from the relevant

Minister. On receipt of this document, CCSJ will take action to wind up as a Limited Liability Company and remain a Department of the Archdiocese of Port of Spain.

## **8.0 SOME CHALLENGES:**

Given the fact that CCSJ no longer has Parish Link Coordinators in post, and only a few parishes have social justice teams in place, it is often difficult to mobilise support at parish level. CCSJ members seek to promote the Commission's goals in their respective parishes and take advantage of invitations to work in other parishes, schools, and with other Departments and organisations.

The Church's Social Teaching should be an integral part of the work of everyone in the Archdiocese since it is integral to the Catholic Faith. Given the lack of dedicated personnel on the ground, and given the Chair's other commitment at the Equal Opportunity Tribunal and on the Council for Responsible Political Behaviour, it is proving difficult to engage in the kind of fund-raising events that the Commission organised in the past e.g. Annual Christmas Dinners.

As stated earlier, however, CCSJ receives funding "in kind" from a number of individuals and their contributions are substantial. CCSJ records its thanks to all those who give so generously their time, talent and treasure freely to enable the Commission/the Church to build God's Kingdom here on earth. The many social ills in TT/the world remain a concern to CCSJ. CCSJ members will continue to raise awareness of the social doctrine of the Church, in the hope that one day more ears will hear, more eyes will see, more voices will speak out and more people will take action to promote justice. It is hoped that with limited resources, Departments within the Archdiocese will strive to optimize the use of our resources by finding more creative ways of working together.

## **9.0 CONCLUSION**

CCSJ continues to play its part in sharing what some believe to be the Church's "best kept secret" - Catholic Social Teaching. As the US Bishops stated in their 1998 document - *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*: "...many Catholics do not adequately understand that the social teaching of the Church is an essential part of Catholic faith. This poses a serious challenge for all

Catholics, since it weakens our capacity to be a Church that is true to the demands of the Gospel. We need to do more to share the social mission and message of our Church...Because this commitment to social justice is at the heart of who we are and what we believe, it must be shared more effectively...

“The values of the Church's social teaching must not be treated as tangential or optional. They must be a core part of teaching and formation. Without our social teaching, schools, catechetical programs, and other formation programs would be offering an incomplete presentation of our Catholic tradition. This would fall short of our mission and would be a serious loss for those in our educational and catechetical programs...

“The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. It offers moral principles and coherent values that are badly needed in our time. In this time of widespread violence and diminished respect for human life and dignity in our country and around the world, the Gospel of life and the biblical call to justice need to be proclaimed and shared with new clarity, urgency, and energy.

“The Scriptures say, ‘Without a vision the people perish’ (Proverbs 29:18). As Catholics, we have an inspiring vision in our social teaching. In a world that hungers for a sense of meaning and moral direction, this teaching offers ethical criteria for action. In a society of rapid change and often confused moral values, this teaching offers consistent moral guidance for the future... The test for our Church is not simply have we ‘kept the faith,’ but have we shared the faith.”

Being a Christian involves more than prayer. We are called to walk with the “two feet of Christian service.” Works of mercy/charity and works of social action. Remember the words of Pope Pius XI stated in *Divini Redemptoris* (1937): “Charity will never be true charity unless it takes justice into account...Let no one attempt with small gifts of charity to exempt themselves from the great duties imposed by justice.” Although there is a relationship between charity and justice they are not the same. Working for justice involves changing systems, structures, institutions and public policies that are at the root cause of injustices such as poverty and social exclusion. It is important to understand the interplay and differences between the two approaches. Social ministry, in the Catholic tradition,

is a "both/and" proposition. While we meet immediate needs today, we work for long-term changes that will create a more just tomorrow – for all.

The Commission's challenge is to raise awareness of the meaning of true Discipleship/servant leadership in today's world. Christ's mandate is clearly outlined in Luke 4:18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free."

The enormity of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us should send us from the images of Christ crucified on Calvary to the images of Christ crucified on the highways and byways of our country and in our world. It is because of the cross that we must continue to work tirelessly for social justice. We must all be committed to do what Pope St. John Paul II asked and be "communicators of hope."

CCSJ members agree with Thomas Massaro who said in his book: *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, "Catholic Social Teaching can serve as a unifying force, a banner under which believers may rally..." It is our sincere hope that the Faithful will rally under this banner. And as we on CCSJ continue to promote the social mission of our Church, let us spread the Good News with credibility and integrity.

**END**

# **Catholic Social Teaching - Key Principles**

*The Sanctity of life & the Dignity of the Human Person*

*The Common Good*

*The Fundamental Option for the Poor and Vulnerable  
Family & Community*

*Participation in the economic, political, social, and  
cultural life of society*

*Rights and Responsibilities*

*Economic Justice*

*Environmental Stewardship – Care for God’s Creation*

*The Role of Government & Subsidiarity*

*Global Solidarity & Development*

*The Dignity of work and the Rights of Workers*

*The Promotion of Peace and Disarmament*

*The Universal Destination of Goods*

To find out more about Catholic Social Teaching, an essential element of our faith, access the Compendium on the Social Doctrine of the Church at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace\\_doc\\_20060526\\_compendio-dott-soc\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html)).



**Contact** the Catholic Commission for Social Justice (CCSJ):

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**CCSJ's Chair,** Leela Ramdeen on 299 8945

**Lay Involvement is Essential**

"The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers."

Gospel Workers, p. 352



*We are the Lord's hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children.*

Thomas S. Monson

We are all farmers tending a little part of the Lord's vineyard.

Sheri L Dew

www.ECCLESIASTIC.COM

*Let us all be cheerful workers in the Lord's Vineyard*

