



Theme: Reducing Crime and Violence

“As a nation, we have to stop and ask, ‘what’s all this anger about and where is all this violence coming from and how are we contributing to this violence?’ People are angry and it is manifested in the way they drive, behave at their homes and in the workplace. I think every citizen can find a way to bring it down. If each of us brings it down in our own sphere, we’ll experience the whole temperature of violence and anger in the country coming back down and that will help. When we see the types of crimes being committed, we have to ask ourselves, is that anger? It seems so strange. My heart goes out for murder victims and their families who have suffered. I will continue to pray for them that God’s mercy will be with them...let us be conscious of the suffering ones in our midst and let’s do something to help and alleviate the suffering.”

(Archbishop Charles Jason Gordon, Palm Sunday, OLPH, S’do, 2019)

CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

16th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Covering the period: 1 Jan 2018 – 31 Dec 2018

WEDNESDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2019

5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

ARCHBISHOP’S HOUSE

27 MARAVAL ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN



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

CCSJ's 16th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2019 (covering period 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2018)

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CCSJ'S 16th ANNUAL GENERAL

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 2017 held on Wed 22 November 2017 & Matters arising from Minutes

- 5:50 p.m. Presentation of Annual Report on CCSJ's work in 2018: CCSJ's Chair

- 6:10 p.m. Adoption of Annual Report and Questions/comments

- 6:15 p.m. Treasurer's Report & Audited Accounts for 2018

- 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 ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018

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

“...For peace to flourish among religions, there must be justice, and respect for human dignity and freedom. Justice is the second wing of peace. No one, therefore, can believe in God and not seek to live in justice with everyone, according to the Golden Rule. So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets. Peace and justice are inseparable!...Religions should keep watch as sentinels of fraternity in the night of conflict. They should be vigilant warnings to humanity not to close our eyes in the face of injustice and never to resign ourselves to the many tragedies in the world.”

(Pope Francis, at an interreligious meeting in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 4 Feb, 2019).

CCSJ is pleased to present its annual report for 2018. The Theme for CCSJ's AGM, which covers activities undertaken during 2018, is: **“Reducing Crime and Violence.”**

BOARD MEMBERS DURING 2018:

- Leela Ramdeen, Episcopal Delegate/Chair of CCSJ
- Annette des Iles, Vice Chair
- Nadine Bushell, Secretary
- Annette McKenzie, Treasurer
- Kirk Bengochea, Member
- Sr Roberta O’Flaherty, Member
- Jo-Ann Taylor-Smith, Member
- Joseph Timothy, Member
- Dianne Wells, Member

CCSJ members record our thanks to Lorna Chee-Wah and Cheryl Wallace, CCSJ's Administrative Assistants, who, through a job-share, continue to 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 Charles Jason Gordon, for his leadership.

CCSJ is grateful for the generosity of a few individuals who continue to lend tremendous in-kind support to the Commission. For example, the following provide services free of charge, saving CCSJ a significant amount of money: 1. Andes Printers: CCSJ’s Newsletters, posters etc. that are provided at a reduced price by Andes; 2. Hayden Louis’s Company provides CCSJ with free graphic designs; 3. L. Dave Lopez & Co., Auditors, provide their services to CCSJ free of charge. As a Company, CCSJ is required to produce audited reports annually.

3. REFLECTION ON CCSJ'S AGM THEME: *Reducing Crime and Violence*

TT’s response to crime is a moral test for our nation. Crime and fear of crime touch all our lives. The status quo is not working. Too many of our institutions are failing, and our entire approach to building a just, inclusive society that fosters respect for life, good neighbourliness, peace and harmony needs to be revised. What do we need to do to imagine and realise a vision of a safer, just and peaceful society? Unless we are committed to promote what the Catholic Church refers to as integral human development, that is the development of each person, and of every dimension of the person, we are spinning top in mud, as the saying goes. Catholics believe that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Every threat to the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person must be addressed with urgency.

It is time to change our lukewarm attempts to effect change/reduce crime and violence. Marla Dukharan, economist, highlights the fact that for every dollar spent on crime in TT in 2018, only 15 cents were spent on prevention. Are we serious about our crime prevention/reduction strategies?

Since the causes of crime are complex, we must have a multi-faceted/multi-sectoral response to this scourge that threatens to overwhelm us. While we all have a part to play in crime prevention/reduction, it is essential that our Government develops an holistic approach to the crime situation. Such an approach requires us to address the root causes of crime and the risk factors that may contribute to crime, for example, poverty, urban decay and social exclusion/inequalities/inequities, family disintegration, lack of quality education and employment, poor housing, mental illness, the proliferation of guns, drug/substance abuse, gang violence, lack of respect for authority and the rule of law.

We must move away from retributive justice and embrace a restorative justice approach to the criminal justice system. As it exists at the moment, the criminal justice system may be an obstacle to sustainable development. We cannot continue to warehouse persons in our prisons for years. The scandal of the large numbers of those on Remand who have been there for many years waiting for their cases to be dealt with must be addressed urgently. Action by the Judiciary is to be welcomed, but more needs to be done to speed up the process.

The conditions in the overcrowded prisons are inhumane and contribute just as much to crime in the nation as poverty and social exclusion. Many are confined to their cells for 23 hours per day. The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the treatment of prisoners, known as the Mandela Rules, have not been embraced by countries in the region. Scientific literature outlines the psychological harms of solitary confinement. Rule 43 of the Mandela Rules specifically prohibits indefinite solitary confinement and prolonged solitary confinement. Rule 44 states that “solitary confinement shall refer to the confinement of prisoners for 22 hours or more a day without meaningful human contact. Prolonged solitary confinement shall refer to solitary confinement for a time period in excess of 15 consecutive days.”

As I have said before, if we are going to be a country that considers human rights, then the systems must work. We have to ask ourselves: “What are we doing to stop the wheel of justice from grinding so slowly?” We cannot reduce crime without looking at the conditions that create it.”

Research shows that rehabilitation can reduce recidivism/reoffending. Our recidivism rate remains high. For more than 3 years (2004-2007) I worked with others on a Cabinet-appointed *Parole Introduction Committee*, seeking, inter alia, to determine the kind of infrastructure that will be required if TT is to introduce Parole. I was pleased to read in the Guardian on August 6, 2019, that the Minister of

National Security, Hon. Minister Stuart Young's statement that his Ministry is in the process of developing a parole system. Prisons should not be warehouses where people grow old, without hope, and where they waste their lives. We need to establish a parole system that is adequately supported by the right kind of infrastructure to ensure its success.

And we know the dangers of ignoring the plight of at-risk youth. See Camille Hunte's Express report on p18 of Mon 4 November on the Joint Select Committee (JSC) hearing. The heading reads: "Dropouts enter life of crime – majority are boys, JSC hears." The discussions during this JSC meeting are important. Reflect on the following.

Inter alia, Hunte's report on the JSC meeting on Fri 1 Nov – enquiring into the academic performance of boys, states that "too many boys are dropping out of school at both the primary and secondary school levels. Many end up being recruited by gangs and involved in criminal activities. Revealing some statistics, committee member Esmond Forde noted that some 700 secondary school pupils dropped out between 2018 and 2019. Between 2014 and 2015, 1,081 secondary school pupils dropped out of their respective schools. In the primary school system, 151 pupils dropped out between 2013 and 2014 with another 31 pupils dropping out between 2016 and 2017. In 2019, primary schools recorded 108 pupils dropping out of classes. The majority of school dropouts are boys, Forde said.

"Committee member Hazel Thompson-Ahye noted, however, that the issue of boys dropping out of school is not a new problem and has been the subject of much research. She questioned if the Ministry of Education was in 'slumber land' as the issues are yet to be adequately addressed. 'These boys are not disappearing into the woodwork,' she said. 'They drop out of school for a number of reasons and they join gangs and we read about them. Some of them have children and these children are without fathers. So this is a question that we really have to deal with as a matter of urgency.'

"Committee chair Dr Nyan Gadsby-Dolly speculated that there was a correlation between boys dropping out of school and the growing prison population. 'I would suspect, and I do not have the data to back that up, that if you look at the prison population the percentage of men... who have dropped out of school or who have underachieved at the school level would be high,' she said.

" 'If we are not doing what it takes to keep our boys in school and educate them, we are exposing them in a sense to that life where they underachieve and then they find their way into nefarious activities.' Thompson-Ahye said the ministry has to 'up its game' and deal with the issue. Chief Education Officer, Harrilal Seecharan revealed that the highest percentage dropout rate occurs in the forms three and five. He said this was perhaps due to pupils leaving to find employment or trades. 'Many of our males

pursue economic activity and due to gender socialisation they don't see the importance of completing school,' he said. 'Students who come from working-class parents or parents who are not employed, that is the particular group that tend to drop out more than likely.'

“He said this was beyond the scope of the Ministry of Education and these issues need the attention of agencies like the Ministry of Social Development. Harrilal said, however, the dropout rate has been decreasing due to the ministry paying increased attention to student absenteeism. 'When we look at the data, in 2018/2019 the number of dropouts would have been reduced to almost 50%.' In addition to the high dropout rate, the committee also raised concerns that boys have been performing poorly academically with boys scoring consistently lower than girls in national examinations. Parental involvement was pointed to as a contributor to boys' poor academic performance.

“However, Thompson-Ahye took teachers to task, calling on them to make an effort to meet with parents at a convenient time. She said while teachers complain about parents not attending PTA meetings, this could be due to PTA meetings being scheduled during working hours. 'Time and time again, we hear about parents not coming to PTA meetings, parents not coming in and teachers are frustrated,' she said. 'When I used to be a teacher, there used to be a PTA meeting after school. Now I understand the PTA meeting takes place during school hours and parents have to take time from work because teachers are not staying after hours...Is it too much to ask that the teacher can stay back so parents can come after work?' Ahye pointed out that teachers are paid their full salaries during the vacation period when they do not have to work. 'I find it is not much of a sacrifice to make as a teacher to stay back to engage with parents if it is just once per term,' she said.”

Unless we have a people-centred approach to development, our efforts will flounder. Over the years there have been numerous reports with many helpful recommendations that will help us to address the crime situation. Recommendations, such as those made in the UNDP's Caribbean Human Development Report 2012: *Human Development and the Shift to Better Citizen Security* should be adopted. For example, the report states that Caribbean governments can reverse the trend of high murder rates. It calls for regional governments “to beef up public institutions to tackle crime and violence – including the criminal justice system-while boosting preventive measures.” It recommends that we should develop a better balance between law enforcement and preventive measures.

The UN's Common Country Assessment (2012-2016) states, inter alia:

“Crime and violence are key constraints to both peace and security in Trinidad and Tobago, but also to development. Crime has risen dramatically over the last 10 to 15 years. It is generally agreed that in-

tra-regional drug trafficking is behind the high rates of crime and violence, and that the explosion of the international drug trade has institutionalised criminal behaviour, increased property-related crime by drug users and underpinned a steady increase in the availability of firearms. The government has articulated its decision to pursue a multipronged approach in an effort to address the political, economic, social, technological and managerial dimensions required to promote safety and security. To date, the government is being supported in these efforts by a Citizens Security Programme funded by the Inter-American Development Bank. In addition, the UNDP is about to launch a Caribbean regional human development report on Citizen Security. The UN Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-LiREC) is assisting in building capacity in Trinidad and Tobago in the areas of firearms destruction and stockpile management.”

Here are a few other suggestions as to how we may be able to employ innovative and effective strategies to prevent and reduce crime and violence:

1. strengthen family life. While we all accept that the family is the building block of society, we are aware of that today the family is under siege and unless we address the challenges families face, our crime-fighting efforts may fail. In the absence of strong family life and with a failing education system, many are turning to gangs looking for their needs to be met, including love. It is in the family that conscience formation should be nurtured; where values and virtues that will stand family members in good stead in society are instilled in them;
2. overhaul our education system to meet the needs of our highly technological age. If there are gaps in the value systems in the home, the school must step in and nurture values and virtues that will enable our youth/adults to do what is right when no one is looking. However, our current education system is not structured to meet the needs of our youth. Read Prof Jerome de Lisle’s study which sought to answer the question: “Is the Trinidad and Tobago education system structured to facilitate optimum human capital development?”
<https://sta.uwi.edu/conferences/09/salises/documents/J%20De%20Lisle.pdf>;
3. develop/implement programmes that include: mentoring, mediation, skills training, substance abuse treatment, probation, parole and reintegration.
4. improve our law enforcement agencies - their detection and conviction rates, their Forensic capabilities, and Court facilities which may serve to improve efficiency and processing of cases;
5. deal with inordinate delays in the system due, for example, to Court backlogs and high caseloads. We must speed up the process to end the backlog of criminal cases in the Judiciary;
6. develop and implement effective witness protection programmes;

7. deal with incompetence and corruption. Corruption in TT is rampant at all levels. Corruption steals from the poor. We have a duty to address white-collar crime more robustly;
8. address the needs of the victims of crime, as well as the families of the perpetrators of crime; find non-lethal means to protect society from offenders. Establish a moratorium on executions, with a view to abolish the Death Penalty and commute all death sentences to terms of imprisonment. Archbishop Desmond Tutu is correct when he says: “There is no justice in killing in the name of justice...”

Today, 142 countries are abolitionist in law or practice. The trend is moving away from the death penalty. The last hanging in our region took place more than ten years ago when, on December 19, 2008, Charles la Place was hanged in St Kitts and Nevis.

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.

In June 2018 the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) ruled that the mandatory death penalty as stated in section 2 of the Offences Against the Persons Act, Ch141, for persons convicted of murder in Barbados is unconstitutional. The CCJ stated that savings clauses, which had ‘saved’ the mandatory death penalty in Barbados, should be condemned. Laws should not be “calcified to reflect the colonial times”.

The same savings clause exists in T&T’s Constitution, and with this CCJ judgement, T&T remains the only English-speaking country in the Caribbean that imposes the mandatory death penalty.

Let’s continue to invite TT’s government to approve the necessary reforms to overrule the mandatory death penalty as a first step towards abolition. While we stand in solidarity with the victims of crime, let’s promote respect for all lives.

It’s helpful also to consider other suggestions for addressing our crime situation. On 12 Dec 2018, as reported in TT’s Guardian, criminologist Renée Cummings says there are three areas that “must be addressed in order to properly deal with the crime, in particular homicides and the detection rate in Trinidad and Tobago. An overhaul of the T&T Police Service, a governmental approach to seriously looking at decriminalizing marijuana and the reform of measures to deal with domestic violence

victims.

(NB: Pope Francis has spoken out against the legalization of marijuana and other drugs in the past. See Kira Bindrim's report in Newsweek on 20 June 2014: During a speech at a hospital in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2013, he said: "A reduction in the spread and influence of drug addiction will not be achieved by a liberalization of drug use. Rather, it is necessary to confront the problems underlying the use of these drugs, by promoting greater justice, educating young people in the values that build up life in society, accompanying those in difficulty and giving them hope for the future."

TT Guardian reported Cummings as saying "...it is also clear that there is no national homicide reduction strategy. 'The response must be evidence-based, which requires accurate analysis of the problem and identification of the appropriate actions to alleviate it ...'

"Cummings said homicide reduction is beyond the parameters of policing and only national effort that is multi-levelled, multi-disciplinary and multi-agency would be adequate enough. " 'That includes government, law enforcement, media, community crime prevention, violence reduction through public education and a criminal justice system that is capable of delivering real-time justice; reducing the high levels of violent retribution in Trinidad and Tobago,' Cummings said.

"'Innovative thinking has been the only approach which has worked, internationally, to reduce homicide. It begins with the right mix of diverse intelligences tackling the problem, cutting-edge analysis, an in-depth understanding of the complex dynamics of violence, the proclivities to perpetrate violence and the interdisciplinary determinants that may have spawned and cultivated an aberrant or criminal lifestyle.'

"Regarding the crime detection rate, Cummings strongly believes a victim-centered approach to the homicide investigation could help increase the 'abysmal' rate. She said homicide investigations need a potent injection of analytic and forensic resources and a new style of communication between law enforcement and communities.

" 'Law enforcement also needs to re-examine its use of force in communities and invest more time, effort and resources in building a strong foundation of trust with communities, so that citizens will feel compelled to share information that will bring perpetrators to justice,' Cummings said.

"Also commenting on the issue, criminologist Daurius Figueira noted that the question of policing continues to be raised. He said there is a severe limitation to how you prevent a domestic squabble

from escalating into violence which is now outside of policing and has to be adjusted by the Government.

“‘This is where we need to look at reforming measures by which victims can get protection to prevent attacks that end in murder,’ he said.”

As you can see from the above, various experts have made recommendations over the years, but we still find ourselves reading/seeing/hearing day after day that crime and violence in TT remains unacceptably high.

It is time for a new national dialogue about how we deal with crime and violence, how we restore a sense of civility and responsibility to everyday life; respect for law and life; how we protect and rebuild communities, and how we help offenders to redeem themselves. We need all hands on deck. I am on board, are you?

4. TREASURER’S REPORT: AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR 2018

4.1 Annette McKenzie, CCSJ’s Treasurer, will present CCSJ’s Audited Accounts for 2018 at this AGM.

The Accumulated Fund balance at 31 December 2018 was: \$375,392 (TT).

Total income increased from \$222,220 (TT) in 2017 to \$241,746 (TT) in 2018.

Funding from the Chancery increased by \$20,704 (TT) 2018. In-kind income was generated by CCSJ for the year 2018. This included free services for Audited Accounts, free printing of CCSJ’s Newsletters and posters.

CCSJ enjoyed a surplus in its financial operations of \$15,241 (TT) in 2018.

Salaries and stipends increased marginally in 2018.

Overall expenditure decreased by \$10,667 in 2018.

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. 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 there are issues relating to CCSJ's land in San Raphael. Attorney-at-Law, Timothy Hamel-Smith is dealing with the issues pro bono.

Annette McKenzie, Treasurer

5. SOME MAJOR EVENTS IN OUR CHURCH IN TT IN 2018

5.1 **9th World Meeting of Families** held in Dublin, Ireland between 21-26 August. The theme for each World Meeting of Families is chosen by the Pope. Pope Francis chose the theme: *The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World*. The Official hymn, "A Joy For All The Earth" was written by Irish composer Ephrem Feeley. Pope Francis attended from 25 to 26.

The Official website for the WMOF states that Pope Francis invited Catholics "to reflect on a theme that was central to the Synodal process that led to his post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia: On Love in the Family*.

'The Church and The Gospel of the Family' was a key theme in the Preparatory Document for the III Extraordinary Assembly of Bishops in October 2014, a document that was the subject of unprecedented consultation among the faithful of the Church across the world. While the preparatory document does not give a specific definition of the term, 'The Gospel of the Family', it does convey at least three senses in which this relatively new phrase in the Church's tradition can be understood:

- The family, founded on the marriage of a man and woman, is part of God's plan from the beginning. The 'Good News' of the family is therefore an indispensable part of the joyful message of the Gospel that the Church proclaims.
- The family is the principal agent of evangelisation of its own members. As the first school of faith and love, the Christian family is often where we ourselves first come to know Jesus and his love.
- The family proclaims the Gospel to the World. The Christian family, by its witness to the life and love of Jesus, is a principal agent of evangelisation to the world.
- As Pope Francis explains in the opening words of *Amoris Laetitia*, "*the Christian proclamation on the family is good news indeed*" (AL,1). *The Christian proclamation of the family is an indispensable part of the 'Good News' of the Gospel. God's plan for the family, revealed in Sacred Scripture from the beginning, is joy for the world!* "

The World Meeting of Families 2018 explored each of these dimensions of theme the *Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World* and what it means for families and the Church today.

See: 10 TAKEAWAYS FROM #POPEINIRELAND WMOF 2018

<https://www.worldmeeting2018.ie/WMOF/media/downloads/10-Takeaways-from-Pope-Francis-in-Ireland.pdf>

1. **The Church is, in a real way, a family among families, and senses the need to support families in their efforts to respond faithfully and joyfully to their God-given vocation in society.**
2. Families are the glue of society.
3. Of all the kinds of human fruitfulness, marriage is unique. It is about a love that gives rise to new life.
4. **Faith is passed on in everyday speech! The speech of the home, everyday life, life in the family.**
5. In our families we need to learn three words: ‘sorry’, ‘please’, and ‘thank you’.
6. It is very important that children learn as early as possible to make the sign of the cross well.
7. Our families are a treasury of living memory, as children become parents and grandparents in turn.
8. **A society that does not value grandparents is a society that has no future.**
9. Amid the storms and winds that buffet our times, may families be a bulwark of faith and goodness.
10. **Share the Gospel of the Family as joy for the world!**

5. 2 *Synod: Oct. 3-28, 2018 Synod of Bishops on youth, faith and vocational discernment.*

5.2.1 See the final document for the Synod: <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/final-document-of-the-synod-of-bishops-on-young-people--faith-an.html>

5.2.2 Letter from the Synod Fathers to Young People

We, the Synod Fathers now address you, young people of the world, with a word of hope, trust and consolation. In these days, we have gathered together to hear the voice of Jesus, “the eternally young Christ”, and to recognize in Him your many voices, your shouts of exultation, your cries, and your moments of silence.

We are familiar with your inner searching, the joys and hopes, the pain and anguish that make up your longings. Now we want you to hear a word from us: we wish to be sharers in your joy, so that your expectations may come to life. We are certain that with your enthusiasm for life, you will be ready to get involved so that your dreams may be realized and take shape in your history.

Our weaknesses should not deter you; our frailties and sins must not be an obstacle for your trust. The Church is your mother; she does not abandon you; she is ready to accompany you on new roads, on

higher paths where the winds of the Spirit blow stronger – sweeping away the mists of indifference, superficiality and discouragement.

When the world that God so loved, that he gave us his only Son, Jesus, is focused on material things, on short-term successes, on pleasures, and when the world crushes the weakest, you must help it to rise up again and to turn its gaze towards love, beauty, truth and justice once more.

For a month, we have walked together with some of you and with many others who have been united to us through prayer and affection. We wish to continue the journey now in every part of the earth where the Lord Jesus sends us as missionary disciples.

The Church and the world urgently need your enthusiasm. Be sure to make the most fragile people, the poor and those wounded by life your traveling companions. You are the present; be a brighter future.

28 October 2018

5.2.3 Pope Francis' address at the opening of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment: <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/news/address-by-pope-francis-at-the-opening-of-the-synod-of-bishops-.html>

5.2.4 And see: "Christus vivit" (Christ is alive): Pope Francis' Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the entire People of God <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/-christus-vivit---post-synodal-exhortation-to-young-people-and-t.html>

5.2.5 In April 2018, the Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference, of which Archbishop Jason Gordon is a member, went to Rome for their *ad limina* visit. As Wikipedia states: *ad limina* “means the obligation of residential diocesan bishops and certain prelates with territorial jurisdiction (such as territorial abbots), of visiting the *thresholds of the* [tombs of the] *Apostles*, Saints Peter and Paul, and of meeting the pope to report on the state of their dioceses or prelatures. It is a formal trip usually made together by all bishops from a single region (viz., an episcopal conference) to discuss with the Pope issues specific to their regions. It is separate from other trips a bishop might make to the Vatican, such as to attend a synod. The *ad limina* visit happens every five years, or quinquennially.”

See the following link to Archbishop Jason's report of the *ad limina* visit - in Catholic News:

<https://catholicnewstt.com/index.php/2018/04/28/archbishop-ad-limina-visit/>

6. REPORT ON OTHER ASPECTS OF CCSJ'S WORK DURING 2018

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 2018. 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 2018 was TT \$20,000.00 – excluding the salaries of the Chair and the 2 part-time Administrative Assistants (job-share).

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 were provided either free of charge or at a reduced rate 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. 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 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/>

And see: [Draft Pastoral Plan for the POS Archdiocese 2019-2023](#)
<https://catholictt.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Draft-Pastoral-Pla...>

SUMMARY OF WORK OUTLINED BELOW: (in no particular order)

AMMR/PMMR

ASK WHY: CCSJ’s monthly one hour TV programme on TCN

CCSJ Materials e.g.:

- Newsletters,
- CCSJ’s Take-a-Bite series (DVD),
- Leaflets focusing on various social justice themes,
- CCSJ’s Calendar for 2018 – on the theme: *Serve Others*

Integrated Pastoral Communications Plan (IPCP)

Council for Responsible Political Behaviour

Promoting a culture of life: e.g. Pro-Life work and Mary Care Centre; and Anti-Death Penalty work
Justice, Peace and Community Week (JPCW)

Facebook and Website

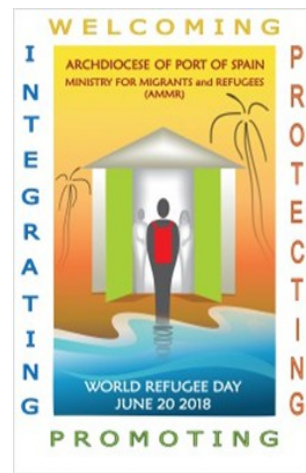
Media Releases

Weekly articles in Catholic News during 2018

Social Justice Quotations published in Catholic News weekly

Collaboration with others, including Archdiocesan Departments, Parishes, Schools, Government Ministries, NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, regional and international organizations, and the Media **Advocacy.**

6.3 AMMR/PMMR:



In May 2018, Archbishop Jason established the Archdiocesan Ministry for Migrants and Refugees (AMMR) and located it within the remit of CCSJ. CCSJ's Chair is also Chair of the AMMR Committee which comprises Rhonda Maingot, Living Water Community (LWC), Rochelle Nakhid (LWC), and Fr Simon Peter Ango who has studied issues relating to M&R and has worked in Rome with M&Rs.

His Grace mandated that all parishes establish a Parish Ministry for Migrants and Refugees (PMMR). At a meeting with the clergy to introduce this new initiative, Priests/Deacons were given a package of resources from the Committee – including a video containing 5 minute presentations by His Grace, Rochelle, Fr Simon and CCSJ's Chair; AMMR's logo; a poster for display in parishes; para-liturgy and a Newsletter containing 20 pastoral action points to assist with the launch/implementation of their Ministries <http://www.rcsocialjusticett.org/downloads/parishlinkmay2018.pdf> .

It was agreed that AMMR members will try to attend PMMR meetings to launch this initiative in parishes. Further resources, such as a Tool Kit which is in draft form, will be circulated shortly.

The Committee is working closely with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and some of the agency's employees have been contributing to parish meetings, along with committee members and some LWC staff with responsibility for this area of work - seeking to strengthen the capacity of Catholics in our Archdiocese and by extension, the wider community, to do as Pope Francis has urged us to do in his

2018 Message for World Day of Peace entitled: *Migrants and refugees: men and women in search of peace*. He has asked us to: *welcome, protect, promote, and integrate migrants and refugees*.

A meeting was held with members of the Clergy on 19 June and the Ministry was officially launched on World Refugee Day - June 20. On that day CCSJ's Chair attended TCN's News and Views programme to share information about AMMR and PMMRs.

As at 30 Jan 2019, the following 11 parishes launched their PMMRs e.g.

North:

St. Anthony's R.C.	- Fr. Christopher Lumsden
Nativity , Crystal Stream	- Fr. Christopher Lumsden
St. Finbars, Morne Coco Road	- Fr. Carlyle Fortune

Central:

Chaguanas: St. Phillip and St. James	- Fr. Derek Anton
Couva: St. Paul's	- Deacon Tristram Mathura Moderator: Fr. Derek Anton

South:

San Fernando : OLPH	- Fr. David Khan;
Penal	- Fr. Robert Christo;
Rio Claro	- Fr. Glyn Jemmoth;
Cedros	- Fr. Antony Baskar

Suburban :

St. Joseph RC, St. Joseph	- Fr. Matthew D'Hereaux
St. Michael's, Maracas Valley	- Fr. Brent Alexis

We know that transformation won't take place overnight. It is important to start a conversation in each parish to raise awareness of the issues involved in building such a Ministry and to ask questions when necessary. Those involved to date are aware of the difference that parishioners can make in the lives of migrants and refugees who come to our shores.

We continue to urge parishes to ensure that this Ministry is not built in isolation from other parish ministries. For example, it is imperative that the **Society of St Vincent de Paul** works collaboratively with PMMRs so that tasks are not duplicated. Indeed, the entire parish should work together to welcome the stranger. Matthew 25: 31–46 remains a key scriptural message underpinning this Ministry.

In T&T there are over 30 countries from which migrants and refugees originate. While there is no legislation here in dealing with refugees, there is a National Policy to Address Refugee and Asylum Matters in Trinidad & Tobago, adopted by Cabinet in June 2014. Parishes are being made aware during our sessions of the implications of seeking to meet the needs of migrants and refugees in the absence of domestic legislation.

In spite of the challenges that we face in seeking to build this Ministry in the absence of domestic legislation, there is much that we can and must do as Catholics to reach out in love and solidarity as we seek to build bridges of hope and to build an inclusive society.

Parishes have recognised the need to provide: **food, clothing, shelter, basic health care, psycho-social and spiritual support, education for children and adults** e.g. English language instruction, translation services, help in adjusting to T&T’s culturally diverse society, friendship, spaces where they can meet to socialise and so on. The positive attitudes being expressed at parish level is an indication that the faithful is up to meeting the challenges and opportunities that exist. Love of neighbour requires us to build bridges and not walls.

Some parishes are finding ways of drawing on the skills /talents that M&Rs bring with them. What has been useful also at parish meetings is the presence of individuals who now live here but who came from the countries from which some migrants and refugees originate. Parishes should draw on their knowledge in any needs analysis that is being conducted.

His Grace has entrusted this Ministry to Our Lady of the Wayside to intercede for us that this initiative bears much fruit.

CCSJ’s Chair met with Marlon, from the UNHCR on November 9. He is creating a database in relation to Migrants and Refugees to determine how best the UNHCR could assist us in TT – in the absence of legislation.

6.4 ASK WHY: CCSJ’s monthly one hour TV programme on Trinity Communications Network. DVDs are available at CCSJ’s Office for use by parishes. Programmes aired during 2018 are as follows:

23 Jan.	<p>Theme:“<i>MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES: MEN AND WOMEN IN SEARCH OF PEACE</i>” <i>Pope’s message , 51st World Day of Peace Celebration- 1 Jan 2018</i> Moderator:<i>L. Ramdeen</i> Panellists:<i>Rhonda Maingot, LWC, Rochelle Nakhid, LWC Ministry for refugees and asylum seekers, and Claire Baptiste-Snr. Case Advocate, LWC</i></p>
	<p>Theme: “<i>BECAUSE OF THE INCREASE OF INIQUITY, THE LOVE OF MANY</i></p>

27 Feb.	WILL GROW COLD (Mt. 24:12)-Pope's 2018 Lenten Message Moderator: Leela Ramdeen Co-Moderator Nadine Bushell Panellists: Mikkel Trestrail - CCC; Rheema Farrell, Catholic Voices
MARCH	PROGRAMME CANCELLED
APRIL	NO ASK WHY FOR APRIL
22 May	Theme:GAUDATE ET EXSULTATE - " REJOICE AND BE GLAD " Moderator: L. Ramdeen Panellists: Nadine Bushell-CCSJ Sec; Mikkel Trestrail-CCC; Najette Abraham-CV
26 Jun.	Theme:"A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN SEXUALITY " Moderator: L. Ramdeen Panellists: N.Bushell-CCSJ Sec.; Fr. Matthew Ragbir-Spiritual Dir. & Theological Adviser, Arch. Family Life Comm & Lecturer of the Seminary; Tonia Gooding-CV & Mbr. of NGO Communities Alive Educating and Training NGOs
24 July	Theme:"HUMAN DIGNITY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING " Moderator: Nadine Bushell Panellists: Alloy Youk See - Social Worker, Mediator, former Senior Prisons Officer, Service & Talk Show Host; Juanita M. Headley, Esq./New York Attorney/CEO & Founder, NGO Changing Cases and Rochelle Nakhid-MMR/LWC
AUGUST	NO ASK WHY FOR AUGUST
25 Sept.	Theme:" THE DEATH PENALTY " Moderator: L. Ramdeen Panellists: Gregory Delzin- Attorney-at-Law & Chair, TT's Sentencing Commission Board, Alloy Youk See - Social Worker, Mediator, former Senior Prisons Officer, Service & Talk Show Host; and Mikkel Trestrail-CCC
23 Oct.	Theme:" CARING FOR CREATION - THE 8TH WORK OF MERCY : MESSENGERS OF NON-VIOLENCE " Moderator: L. Ramdeen Panellists: Najette Abraham& Rheema Farrell-CV; Analisa Ramsahai-Franciscan Institute
27 Nov.	Theme:"PREPARING FOR THE PRINCE OF PEACE " Moderator: L. Ramdeen Panellists: Mikkel Trestrail-CCC; Nadine Bushell-CCSJ Sec; Rheema Farrell-CV;
DEC	NO ASK WHY FOR DECEMBER

6.5 CCSJ Materials e.g.:

6.5.1 Newsletters: CCSJ's Newsletter, *Parish Link* is widely circulated to parishes, Catholic schools, and Archdiocesan departments/organizations. It is also uploaded on CCSJ's Website and referenced on CCSJ's Facebook page. These are printed free of charge by Andes (Pat Hernandez). Since we need to transition to a paper-less Archdiocese – as far as possible, CCSJ will significantly reduce the number of copies printed e.g. only 1 copy will be printed for parishes, as opposed to 2. The following are the Newsletters that were prepared in 2018. They are also available on CCSJ's Website:

January 2018: Pope Francis' Message to celebrate the 51st World Day of Peace – 1 January 2018. The title is: *Migrants and refugees: men and women in search of peace.*

February 2018: Pope Francis' Message for Lent 2018 (14 Feb to 29 Mar). Theme: "*Because of the increase of iniquity, the love of many will grow cold*" (Mt 24: 12).

April 2018: Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE ('Rejoice and Be Glad'), with the subtitle "On the call to holiness in the contemporary world."

May 2018: 3 Documents to support the Archdiocese's Ministry for Migrants and Refugees

1. Message of Pope Francis for the celebration of the 51st World Day of Peace (1 Jan 2018), entitled: Migrants and refugees: men and women in search of peace.
- 2&3. Responding to Refugees and Migrants: 20 Action Points and 20 Action Points for the Global Compacts which provide concrete advice for welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating Migrants and Refugees. These Action Points were produced by the Migrants & Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

6.5.2 CCSJ's Take-a-Bite series: These DVDs on a number of social justice themes, have been circulated to all parishes and copies are still available at CCSJ's Office for those who wish to order copies.

6.5.3 Nine Leaflets focusing on various social justice themes: These leaflets were printed and distributed a few years ago. A few copies are still available. No further copies will be printed as we go "paper-less".

6.5.4 CCSJ's Calendar for 2018 – on the theme: Serve Others. The wording on the Calendar stated: "*Give your hands to serve and your hearts to love*" (St Teresa of Calcutta). These were printed free of charge and distributed to parishes etc.

6.6 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.”

CCSJ reported that its activities to promote Archbishop Harris’ pastoral letter on HOSPITALITY included:

- an Ask Why TV programme on the theme;
- 4 articles in CCSJ's weekly column in Catholic News: Showing hospitality to widows; Practise hospitality this Holy Week; Return to Hospitality; Be Peacebuilders.
- over the years, CCSJ has responsibility for showing hospitality to those persons who come to Archbishop's House and are in need.

NB: As stated above, 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/>

The work of IPCP will be linked to the Pastoral Plan.

6.7 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. All five political parties signed the code.

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.

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.”

At the launch, Archbishop Harris also 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.

Among the commitments within the Code are that political parties should maintain the highest moral principles and ethical standards, promoting and enforcing respect, tolerance, harmony and peace. The Code also prescribes obedience to the law while upholding the integrity of the electoral process.

The Code prohibits the offer of inducements to voters, threatening persons' jobs, abuse of power and office, making defamatory allegations, use of language that intimidates candidates, incites violence and fosters hatred and divisiveness, among other things. Officials of political parties are responsible for ensuring that their respective organizations abide by the Code.

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

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 2018, the Council held 1 meeting on Thurs June 28. Meetings are usually held in the Boardroom at the Institute of International Relations, UWI, St. Augustine Campus.

With **Local Government elections** scheduled to take place in **July 2019**, and **General Elections** due in **2020**, the Council is seeking to ensure that all political parties that originally signed as members, are represented on the Council. Sadly, a number of persons have 'dropped out' and efforts are being made to get some Political Parties to fill vacancies.

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.

Council's Media Release in 2018: Bye-elections in the Local Government Districts of Belmont East and Barataria took place on July 16, 2018. By the time of the Council's meeting on 28 June, 2018, there had already been negative feedback in the media with respect to campaigning for the bye-election. In anticipation of the heightening of political activity in the two weeks of campaigning prior to the Bye-election, the Council agreed to issue a Media Release immediately, asking political parties to abide by the Code in the run-up to the Bye-election. The release was issued at the end of June 2018.

During 2018 **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 2018):

- 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.



First photo above: Assemblyman, Kelvin Charles, leader of the Tobago Council for the People’s National Movement, Second photo: Ms. Christlyn Moore of the Tobago Forwards. Third photo: Ms. Eudine Job-Davis of the Movement for Transformation

Two weeks before the THA polls in Tobago in 2017, Chair of the Council, Dr Bishnu Ragoonath, journeyed to Tobago for the signing of the *Code of Ethical Political Conduct* by the leaders of 3 Parties. Dr Ragoonath is pictured in an orange shirt above. The photos above were taken in Tobago when the 3 parties signed to “embrace” the *Code of Ethical Political Conduct*.

Mr Watson Duke, leader of the Progressive Democratic Patriots, did not sign the Code.

Officials of political parties are responsible for ensuring that their respective organisations abide by the Code.

Planned Activities for the Council:

During 2018, the Council was made aware of plans for the formation of several political parties. This suggests that there may be several political parties vying for the next Local Government (2019) and General Elections (2020).

At the meeting on 28 June 2018, there was a discussion about the kind of activities that the Council can take in the lead up to the next series of elections. These activities could include:

1. Scheduling of a Joint Meeting of the Founding Organizations with the Council. The Agenda will include proposed activities of the Council for the next twelve months
2. Preparation of a report of the Council's activities to date.
3. Contacting political parties once again to obtain feedback on suggested revisions to the Code of Ethical Political Conduct. These include:

- i) Political parties contesting elections agreeing to participate in live debates
- ii) Political parties represented on the Council should be contesting the elections

These discussions can be scheduled to take place at their General Council Meetings.

4. Hosting an event with the media at which political parties re-commit to abide by the Code. This event could be scheduled closer to the 2019 Local Government Election

5. Education programmes

- i) Secondary school education programme

Students and school administrators can be encouraged to participate in planning the framework for the School Education Programme

Students can be given the opportunity to present their issues related to elections.

These should be held in various districts and in Tobago

6. Social media campaign: The Council

- i) will consult with Graham Rostant to design a social media campaign – to include video clips and messaging;

- ii) request the assistance of UWI students to roll out the Council's social media campaign.

7. Other initiatives for public education

- i) CCSJ's monthly television programme – Trinity TV

- ii) Jaagriti TV

- iii) Paul Richard's television productions
- iv) Printing of the Code in the daily newspaper.

6.8 Promoting a culture of life: e.g.

6.8.1 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.

During 2018, 8 young pregnant women were housed at Mary Care Centre. Four of them had their babies.

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.

6.8.2 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 To-

bago: 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. On July 1 CCSJ issued a Media Release on this issue, inviting the government of Trinidad and Tobago to approve the necessary reforms to immediately overrule mandatory death penalty.

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.

6.8.2.1 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.

6.8.2.2 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."

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.”

NB: It is to be noted that in 2016 the AEC Bishops issued a 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.”

6.8.2.3 Observing the 16th World Day Against the Death Penalty on the theme: Living conditions on death row: On 17 October, CCSJ partnered with Amnesty International and the TT NGO, RED Initiatives, to host the screening of the film, *The Penalty*, at Alliance Francaise, 17 Alcazar St., St Clair. It was followed by a panel discussion. Panellists were: Jason Nathu, Hugh Wooding Law School Legal Aid Clinic; Alloy Youk See, Social Worker, Radio Host, and former Senior Prison Officer, and Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ.

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. Sadly, though, we were, in effect, “preaching to the converted”, as about 6 Embassies and the EU Delegation were represented, as well as anti-death penalty advocates.

6.8.2.4 Latest research on capital punishment:

Death Penalty: What Happens to Murder Rates when the Death Penalty is Scrapped? A Look at Eleven Countries Might Surprise You

REPORT	Abdorrahman Boroumand Center <i>Abdorrahman Boroumand Center</i> December 13, 2018
	Report 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?](https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/node/7288?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3srVHXDVgMXQ2xpRZhVQsU-vwokGtU2-hlDEhGO_N2WoaQwgR4oFAGzkvY)

[utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3srVHXDVgMXQ2xpRZhVQsU-vwokGtU2-hlDEhGO_N2WoaQwgR4oFAGzkvY](https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/node/7288?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3srVHXDVgMXQ2xpRZhVQsU-vwokGtU2-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_2017WorldDayLeaflet.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!”

6.8.2.5 It should be noted that CCSJ’s Chair, as Chair also of the Greater Caribbean for Life, is involved in a 3-year **European-Funded Project** which involves 5 organisations: Death Penalty Project, World Coalition against the Death Penalty, UWI, Cave Hill, St Vincent and the Grenadines Human

Rights Org. and the Greater Caribbean for Life (GCL). CCSJ works closely with GCL. CCSJ's Chair attended the launch of the 3-year EU funded Project in Barbados from Thurs 21 June to Sun 24 June. His Grace arranged for a representative from the Chancery in Barbados to attend the event.

The aim of the project is to build a strong platform to support the work of abolitionists in 7 countries in the region: *Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean States*: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The objective of this event was to allow the partners to meet and set strong basis for their collaboration in the fight for the abolition of the death penalty in the region. The opening of the meeting was attended by around 30 people including the partners of the project, law students of the Cave Hill campus, but also representatives from the European Union and the United Nations in Barbados.

After the opening, several sessions took place, where the partners of the project presented the different activities that they will develop within the three years: a study and a survey, mobilization kits, information tools, Universal Periodic Report - shadow reports, speaking tours as well as films and documentary screenings." Partners on the Project also hope to create a strong civil society movement in each one of the countries.

The second day was fully devoted to a training for the country representatives. It started with a *tour de table*, where each representative presented the situation of the death penalty in their country and the obstacles to its abolition. The three main obstacles that came out of the discussion are public opinion, political will and the lack of awareness raising. The purpose of the training was to work on how to overcome the obstacles. To this end, the facilitator presented case studies on successful strategies for the abolition of the death penalty. Later on, the participants worked on a concrete advocacy strategy and presented the events that they are planning for [World Day against the Death Penalty](#)".

6.8.2.6 On Tuesday 9 October, CCSJ's Chair represented His Grace and presented a paper at an event organised by the Delegation of the European Union to T&T, to mark World Day against the Death Penalty. Her paper is available on CCSJ's website. The event was well attended. Other speakers included the EU Ambassador, the Australian Ambassador, Prof Rose-Marie Belle Antoine (Dean of the Law Faculty, UWI), and a UWI Student.

6.8.2.7 CCSJ's Chair joined Kevin Rivera, President of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty (WCADP), and Jessica Corredor, Coordinator of WCADP, to make 3 presentations at a hearing of the Inter Am on 6 December, CCSJ's Chair, and also Chair of the Greater Caribbean for Life (GCL), joined, Kevin Miguel Rivera Medina, President of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP) and Jessica Corredor Villamil, Programme manager of the WCADP, in addressing Commissioners of the Inter American Commission on Human Rights at the Commission's 170th Series of Hearings - held at the Organisation of American States (OAS) headquarters in Washington, D.C., USA.

The President of the IACHR is Justice Margarette May Macaulay, a Jamaican. The aim of the hearing was:

- To call upon the countries that still retain the death penalty, and in particular the English-speaking Caribbean states, to join the universal trend towards the abolition of the death penalty.
- To raise awareness of the living conditions on death row and the death penalty situation in the United States and in Puerto Rico.
- To remind OAS member states of the importance of ratifying the American Protocol on the abolition of the death penalty in light of the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the protocol by the OAS in 2020.

CCSJ's Chair reminded Commissioners that GCL had presented a paper at the 154th Thematic hearing of the IACHR on 15 March 2015.

***CCSJ's Chair was able to inform the Commissioners that the Catholic Church has revised its teaching on the Death Penalty (see Catechism para 2267), stating, inter alia, that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person, and (the Church) works with determination for its abolition worldwide." She also reminded them that a number of other faith communities are also opposed to the death penalty.

IACHR Commissioners re-affirmed their commitment to support the work of the 2 organisations.

NB: The 2015 and the 2018 presentations are available on CCSJ's website.



Kevin Miguel Rivera, President of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty; Leela Ramdeen, Chair, GCL & CCSJ; and Esmer-

alda Arosemena de Troitino, First Vice President of the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) at the IACHR hearing in Washington on December 6, 2018.



Jessica Corredor, Project Manager, World Coalition against the Death Penalty (WCADP); Kevin Miguel Rivera, President of WCADP; and Leela Ramdeen, Chair, GCL & CCSJ at the end of their presentation at a hearing of the IACHR in Washington.

6.9 Justice, Peace and Community Week (JPCW) 2018: on the theme: *Caring for Creation: 8th Work of Mercy*, “ran” from Saturday 20 October to Saturday 27 October. A Calendar of key events and a Prayer Supplement were published in Catholic News. Sr Juliet Rajah produced the Prayer Supplement. In his message for World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in Sept 2016, entitled ‘*Show mercy to our common home*’, Pope Francis declared Caring for Creation as the 8th Work of Mercy —to be added to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

The following is a list of activities held during JPCW:

DATE & TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
Saturday, 20 October 1.30 – 2.30 p.m.	OPENING EVENT : Archbishop Jason Gordon (pre-taped video clip) Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ	Aired on TCN / Ch 10 – LIVE LWC Community Frederick Street, POS
Sunday, 21 October	All Parish Priests/Parish Administrators were asked to encourage the Faithful to pray the Rosary during Justice, Peace and Community Week	All parishes
Monday, 22 October 7 – 9 p.m.	Prayer Session Organised by Eternal Light Community	St Charles Borromeo RC Church, Eastern Mn Rd., Tunapuna
Tuesday, 23 October 8 – 9 p.m.	CCSJ’s Ask Why TV programme ‘Nonviolence and the Environment’. Moderator: Leela Ramdeen	Aired on TCN / Ch 10 – LIVE LWC Community Frederick Street, POS
Wednesday, 24	School activity	All Catholic schools

October	All Catholic schools were asked to focus on the theme	
Thursday,25 October 6 – 8 p.m.	Vigil Focus on the theme Organised by Emmanuel Community	Emmanuel Community, 46 Rosalino Street, Woodbrook
Friday,26 October 7 – 9 p.m.	Youth Event: <i>Spoken Word Competition</i> Focused on the theme Schools and parishes: ages 13 – 21 years Organised by CCSJ and Youth Commission	Aired on TCN / Ch 10 – LIVE LWC Community Frederick Street, POS
Saturday,27 October	HOLY HOUR – Before Mass All Parish Priests/Parish Administrators are asked to encourage Youths to lead a holy hour on the theme	All Parishes

For the fourth year during Justice, Peace and Community Week, CCSJ partnered with the Youth Commission to hold a **Spoken Word Competition** on the theme. The proceedings were aired live on TCN at Living Water Community on **Friday, October 26, 2018 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.** The host of the event was Lue-Ann Henry.

Episcopal Delegate for Youth, Winston Garcia and I thanked the following 12 contestants for sharing their expertise with us: *El'isha Allen, Kyle De Gannes, Mark Howell-Paul, Emmanuel Joseph, Liam Mohammed, Stephan Pierre, Saphia Trim, Saria Seecharan, Adam Michael Suite, Mikkel Toussaint, Mikayla Cassandra Weekes, and Nathaniel Williams* – all between 13 – 21 years of age.

Our youth are partners in the process of promoting integral ecology, which Pope Francis spoke about in his encyclical, *Laudato Si*, and in which he said: “Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future, without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded” (LS13).

The involvement of youth in responding to TT’s recent floods in 2018 is a clear indication that they are up to the challenge of addressing environmental degradation and climate change. The spirit of volunteerism in T&T is alive and well.

First prize: *The End of Creation* by Emmanuel Joseph

Second prize: *We are the World* by Mark Howell-Paul

Third prize: **Caring for Creation** by Mikayla Weekes

They received monetary cash prizes valued at \$2,000.00, \$1,500.00 and \$1,000.00 respectively.

All participants were given certificates of participation and medals as tokens of appreciation.

Entertainment during the event included:

- b. A Steel Pan performance by Emmanuel Joseph, one of the competitors;
- c. Music and songs of worship by the band: Resolution;
- d. Spoken Word poem by well-known artiste Carlon George;
- e. Music by Joseph ‘Joey’ Rivers.



Singers in the Band, Resolution -
Songs of Worship at the Spoken Word event



Emmanuel Joseph, winner of the Spoken
Word Competition at LWC Fri. Oct 26



CCSJ’s Chair with some of the participants in the competition – including the top 3 winners.

2nd Prize winner was Mark Howell-Paul

3rd Prize winner was Mikayla Weekes

BRIEF ‘EVALUATION’ OF JPCW: Sadly, after so many years, JPCW is not observed widely across the Archdiocese. And yet this is supposed to be an Archdiocesan event.

6.10 Facebook and Website:

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.

There are also a number of useful CCSJ documents under the heading: **Special Focus** on our Website (<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 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 2018 CCSJ issued the following releases. They are all on CCSJ's website:

July 1 – [CCJ rules that mandatory death penalty in Barbados is unconstitutional](#)

Aug 3 – [CCSJ, GCL welcome Pope's decision to revise Church's teaching on Death Penalty](#)

Oct 3 – [A call for more humane living conditions for death row inmates](#)

Oct 16 – [Responding to domestic violence is everyone's business](#)

Dec 18 – [Tenth anniversary of the last hanging in the region](#)

6.12 Weekly articles in Catholic News during 2018:

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. The 3 main National Newspapers continue to publish some of these articles produced by CCSJ.

6.13 Social Justice Quotations published in Catholic News weekly aim 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.

6.14 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.

6.14.1 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.

On Sun 7 October, CCSJ's Chair represented the Catholic Church at an Inter-Faith Service entitled: Non-violence Begins with Me. The event was part of the Nonviolence Movement's initiative to commemorate Non-violence Month. CCSJ's Chair focused on the needs of Migrants and Refugees.

6.14.2 Symposium: On Sat 9 June from 2 pm to 5:00 pm., CCSJ held a Symposium on the theme: *Understanding and promoting Restorative Justice in TT*: CCSJ partnered with the Dean of the Faculty of Law, UWI, St Augustine Campus, Ms. Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, to organise this Symposium. It was held at The Faculty of Law Auditorium, The Noor Hassanali Auditorium, UWI.

On Fri 8 June CCSJ's Chair was a guest on CTV to promote the Symposium
Speakers at the Symposium included:

Archbishop Jason Gordon, Archdiocese of Port of Spain

Glenda Jennings-Smith, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of National Security

Gregory Delzin, Attorney-at-Law & Chair, TT's Sentencing Commission Board

Hazel Thompson-Ahye, Attorney-at-Law & Licensed Trainer on Restorative Practices

Carlos Coraspe, Deputy Commissioner of Prisons, Offender Management

Ceron Richards, President of the Prisons Association

Alloy Youk See, Social Worker, Mediator former Welfare Officer, Prison Service, & Talk Show Host

Andrew Douglas, Inmate, Maximum Security Prison

Natasha de Leon, Inmate, Women's Prison

Moderators: Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ & Attorney-at-Law and Prof. Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Dean, Faculty of Law, UWI, St Augustine Campus

The Symposium was well attended and received good media coverage, including Catholic News.

Gerry Layne taped the proceedings. A copy of the tape is available at CCSJ's Office for use by members, and for parishes that are interested in promoting Restorative Justice. His Grace followed up the event by writing about RJ in his column. It is hoped that the symposium went some way to raising awareness of this important concept and to encourage 'buy-in' so that we can create a culture in which RJ can prosper. The challenge is always not only to raise awareness, but to influence policy decisions/action.

6.14.3: 3rd Youth Expo: On Sat 23 June, CCSJ member, Jo Ann Smith, represented CCSJ at the 3rd Youth Expo, entitled: *Called to Serve*. She and her family ran a CCSJ Booth at the event.



Jo Ann and her family engaged youth in activities, including the one shown in these 2 photos.

6.14.4 CCSJ members were all involved in one way or another in helping others during the wide-spread **flooding in T&T in October** e.g. by providing food, clothing, prayers, transportation, a listening ear and so on. CCSJ's Chair was also asked to write an article about the floods for a London-based Magazine, entitled: *Culture-Pulse*. Her article is also available on CCSJ's website: [A nation comes together in time of disaster](#) .

6.14.5 some activities in which CCSJ's Chair was involved/collaborated with others:

CCSJ's Chair:

6.14.5.1 SafeCommunitiTT: CCSJ's Chair attended a Workshop in Tobago from **19-22 Jan 2018**. It was entitled: SafeCommunitiTT, and was organised by Ms Kiran Maharaj, President of the TT Publishers & Broadcasters Association (TTPBA); the Public Affairs Section of US Embassy, POS; and the Department of State's Global Engagement Centre. All expenses were paid for by the Organisers. 30 organisations and 9 organisers participated in the event.

One of the key objectives was to assist key TT organisations to be able to counter violent extremism (VE). The definition of VE used during the session is as follows: "VE refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use ideologically motivated violence to achieve radical ideological, religious or political views. Violent extremist can be exhibited along a range of issues, including politics, religion and gender relations.

Countering strategies will involve:

- a. Inoculating: vaccinating individuals so that they will not be susceptible to join extremist organisations;
- b. Preventing: engaging individuals that are 'at risk' or susceptible to joining a terrorist organisation;
- c. Intervening: In situations where persons are actively supporting a terrorist organisation;
- d. Operationalising: Dealing with foreign fighters or those actively engaging in a terrorist act - Law Enforcement activity.

Inter alia, those gathered considered ways of addressing violent extremism, e.g. prevention and intervention; strategies for developing a strategic communications campaign; being aware of the drivers of radicalization – push and pull factors, the narratives that are used to recruit e.g. religious, ideological, political, social, psychological and economic; how to develop a campaign to address this issue – including a communications campaign and a monitoring and evaluation plan.

-Following this event, participants were invited to bid for grants as part of a *Small Grants Program* offered by the US Embassy and TTPBA. CCSJ was not eligible to apply as the Commission does not have a track record of running the kind of projects listed. The grants would assist organisations: “To develop effective countering violent extremism (CVE) strategic communication campaigns to protect communities against the influence of terrorism and violence; and to develop safe communities in Trinidad and Tobago.”

-On **Mon 25 June** CCSJ’s Chair represented His Grace at a **Symposium entitled: *Safe CommuniTT symposium on countering violent extremism***. It was held at the Banquet Conference Centre, Fiesta Plaza, 3rd Floor, Movie Towne. As stated above, CCSJ’s Chair has been involved with the Safe CommuniTT group of individuals/organisations since January 2018. The event on 25 June gave those whose applications for grants were successful, to present their proposed projects to those present. The group keeps in touch via Whatsapp and we share valuable information with each other. Many of the organisations are run by Muslims or Christian denominations – not Catholic, in areas such as Beetham, Laventille, Enterprise and so on. They are doing sterling work with little recognition or resources.

-The above is linked to a **Workshop** that CCSJ’s Chair attended on **Thurs 5 July** at the AG’s Offices at the Government’s Campus Plaza, POS. It was another awareness-raising session re preventing and countering violent extremism in TT.

It was organised by the Non-Profit Organisation Team (NPOT) led by the Ministry of the Attorney General & Legal Affairs, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat, (CVE Unit) during the month long activities being planned for July 2018 in Trinidad and Tobago on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE).

“The Workshop targeted a small group of 35 persons from NGOs/NPOs operating in Trinidad and Tobago on specific projects and programmes to increase awareness on public safety more specifically in the realm of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE).

The key five (5) speakers at the Workshop, would be:

- (1) The Ministry of Social Development & Family Services, NGO Unit;
- (2) Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago,
- (3) the Financial Investigations Branch, TTPS, and
- (4) The Ministry of the Attorney General & Legal Affairs – **a.** Registrar General’s Division & **b.** Anti-Terrorism Desk.

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The sessions aimed to sensitise/provide information on safeguards to NGOs/NPOs re illegal activity including money laundering and combatting the financing of terrorism in collaboration with a wider programme in July 2018 supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Countering Violent Extremism Unit.

The Workshop comprised four (4) discussion and presentation areas:

- (1) Increased awareness of the terrorism financing risks posed to the non-profit sector and of challenges faced in preventing the abuse of non-governmental organizations;
- (2) Increased understanding and discussion of international standards and best practices used to regulate non-profit sector;
- (3) Identifying risks to the NGO sector from terrorist financing typologies and exploring ways to safeguard the sector in Trinidad and Tobago; and
- (4) Developing continuous engagement with key NGOs/NPOs operating in Trinidad and Tobago.

-On **Thurs 20 Sept and on 14 December CCSJ's Chair attended a Safe CommuniTT event** organised by the Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy - at 18 Mary St., St Clair. The aim is to keep everyone focused on combating violent extremism/terrorism.

6.14.5.2 attended a **Civil Society Consultation** organised by the EU Delegation to Trinidad & Tobago.

It was held at 10.00 in the EU Delegation's premises, POS on Wednesday, 24th January 2018. The event was organised in the context of the EU's Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy Implementation Report 2017. Before the event I had completed and submitted a questionnaire on HR issues sent to me by the EU (see our Correspondence File). The Agenda for the event was: 1. Overview of the HRDCS; 2. Discussion on main common challenges and how to address them; 3. Identification of realistic and concrete Human Rights objectives for 2018.

6.14.5.3 ran a **session at Living Water Community** on Thurs 25 Jan on the Church's key social justice principles - at the request of Rochelle Nakhid, Programme Coordinator at the LWC for refugees and asylum-seekers. About 20 members of staff from this programme were present. Since most of them are non-Catholics, the session was important to raise their awareness of the Church's social doctrine.

6.14.5.4 attended the screening of the **film: SOLD** at Movie Towne, POS on Monday 29 Jan. It was shown as part of Human Trafficking Awareness Month, 2018. It was created to spread awareness about human trafficking and protect children from being trafficked. It is directed by Academy Award Winner Jeffrey Brown and adapted from the internationally acclaimed novel by Patricia McCormick. The Film focuses on the horrors that human trafficking victims face. It follows the experiences of Lakshmi, a 13-year-old Nepalese girl who was unwittingly sold into prostitution – from her mountain village in Nepal. As LA Times states: “Her Parents unwittingly send her off with ‘Auntie’ Bimla...a charismatic visitor to their mountain village, to supposedly work as a domestic in India. However, once Lakshmi arrives in Kolkata, she finds herself imprisoned in a shabby brothel called ‘Happiness House’ and forced to work under the iron fist of its cruel madam, Mumtaz...Witnessing the naïve, terrified and at times drugged Lakshmi submit to the bordello's nasty, violent clientele is tough stuff.”

6.14.5.5 participated in the **Suburban Vicariate's Youth Assembly** on Sun 4 February, entitled: ‘Tell it like it is’. The Assembly began at 9 a.m. with praise and worship led by St Michael's, Maracas Valley. Dr Andrea Hutchinson of Bourg Mulatresse RC, who has supported CCSJ in the past, made a presentation to the youth who attended from about 7 of the 11 parishes. She told the young people they had the power to make a difference in society and that they should not be afraid of being “game changers”. Those assembled were placed in small groups and discussed issues relating to: faith, sexuality, and social issues. Questions on these and other topics were then put to a panel which comprised: Fr Jayson Grell FMI, Sr Sandra Xavier OP, Br Colin Jackson CSSp, seminarian Stephan Alexander, youth leader - Darrion Narine, and me. Archbishop Jason joined the Assembly during the course of the morning and responded to questions from some of the youth. The questions reflected the fact that our Youth have many issues they wish to raise and it is important that the Church provides ‘space’ for them to discuss these issues within a loving, caring, Catholic environment.

6.14.5.6 observed **World Social Justice Day** on Tues Feb 20 by attending Vision on Mission's (VOM) Preparation for release launch 2018, entitled: ‘*Changing the Criminal Thinking*’ — held at the Maximum Security Prison in Arouca. (see Catholic News - 4 March 2018 for my report on this event -

entitled: “Keeping former offenders on the straight and narrow.) Wayne Chance and various speakers spoke with passion.

Having spent a few days at a workshop in Tobago in January with Wayne and a number of NGO leaders who go the extra mile to lift T&T out of the depths of crime and violence to which we have descended, I know that all is not lost. There are enough good T&T citizens who continue to work tirelessly to build our nation. Wayne and his VOM Team must be commended for the innovative ways in which they strive to achieve their mission of providing “rehabilitation, reintegration and resettlement services for prisoners, ex-offenders, deportees, delinquent youth and some socially displaced persons”.

While there is a widely held belief that the majority of persons in our prisons are of African descent, VOM’s recent study shows that the largest group of those incarcerated in the POS prison are of **mixed descent**. Fifty per cent of those in POS prison have reoffended and returned to prison 1–3 times, while the recidivism rate for 29 per cent is 4–6 times. Such data helps VOM to develop intervention programmes.

The challenge for us in T&T is to stop the revolving door. Glenda Jennings-Smith, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of National Security, is correct when she said at the forum that civil society and the business community must come on board to support initiatives such as those instituted by the Government and by groups such as VOM.

There were powerful testimonials by Peter Holder who spent 33 years in prison and who received a Presidential pardon, and Michael Sennon, a deportee who spent 31 years in prison in the USA. Both of them are now gainfully employed and have turned their lives around.

While I was pleased to learn of the Government’s electronic monitoring scheme that will soon come on stream, I urged those on the Electronic Monitoring Committee to ensure that this scheme is linked to support mechanisms to reduce recidivism.

I also stressed the need for TT to address the root causes of crime in T&T, the ineffectiveness of our criminal justice system – including issues relating to bail and to the warehousing of persons on remand, as well as the inhumane conditions in our prisons and our outdated 1943 prison rules; the need for an integrated/multidisciplinary/cross sector approach to address deficiencies in the administration of justice and the need to move from a retributive system of justice to a restorative justice (RJ) approach.

6.14.5.7 attended a number of events during the week of Mon 5 Mar to Fri 9 Mar to observe **International Women’s Day (IWD)** which was observed on March 8. The theme in 2018 was the ‘Time is

now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives' - #pressforprogress. The theme built on the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements. Events attended by CCSJ's Chair included:

* Women's City Village at the City Hall, Port of Spain.

* Launch/session organised by the Interclub of TT and the Institute for Gender and Development Studies UWI - Panel Discussion on Mon 5 March on the theme: Press for Gender Justice – *Ecological Justice. Peace, Security and Justice. Sexual Justice. Economic Justice.*, held at the School of Education Auditorium.

* Panel Discussion and closing Reception (5-7pm) at the Hyatt – to end the week's activities. The event was organised by The Powerful Ladies of T&T (PLOTT). Speakers on the Panel were: Angela Lee Loy, Chairman at Aegis Business Solutions Limited; Terry Ince, Founder, Consultant and Vice President Marketing & Business Development of Kimeta Personalized Education Support Systems; Tricia Basdeo read Dr Gabrielle Hosein's paper in her absence. Gabrielle is Head of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies UWI, St. Augustine, Terry Ince and Gillian Wall - Group CEO, IBB Global and Co-Founder and Chief PLOTter of PLOTT. It was noted that the World Economic Forum's 2017 Global Gender Gap Report's findings state that gender parity is over 200 years away!

It should be noted also that many of the organisers used every opportunity to press for a Gender Policy to be put before Parliament and passed. In some discussions, it was clear that certain faith communities were seen as presenting obstacles to the formulation of a Gender Policy. We just need to continue standing up for our beliefs e.g. in relation to the sanctity of life from conception until natural death.

6.14.5.8 was a guest on C TV (Ch 106) at 6:00 a.m. on 13 March to discuss issues relating to the challenge of strengthening family life, and to comment on the fact that the **Anti-Gang Legislation** that has been passed unanimously in the Lower House and was at that time before the Upper House, provides for parents to be accountable for their children's actions if they belong to gangs. During this week C TV organised to celebrate Women – as an extension of International Women's Day, by having a number of women on the Good Morning T&T programme with Verna Bharath. CCSJ's Chair was the first woman interviewed during the week. The programme was repeated twice during the course of the day.

6.14.5.9 I attended a Consultation Session at the National Racquet Centre, on Orange Grove Road, Tacarigua, on 16 March from 8am to 3.15pm to comment on the Green Paper – National Parenting Policy for TT . This falls within the remit of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. This Ministry “will be hosting 3 phases of consultations to garner the views of key stakeholders on the

Policy.” The session on Friday 16 March was Phase 1. During the session the aim was to “capture the views of partner ministries, NGOs and FBOs, as well as international organisations and academia. The format for Phase II will be national consultations targeted at the general public, while Phase III will be in the form of focus group sessions targeted at specific groups of parents and children.” The Green Paper can be accessed via www.social.gov.tt . There was a draft National Parenting Policy prepared in 2015 under the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development.

6.14.5.10 attended part of the Conversation with Archbishop Jason – with Youth and Young Adult Ministry – held at St Charles, Tunapuna on Sat March 17.

6.14.5.11 joined Fr Matthew Ragbir and Deacon Derek Walcott on **Shepherds Corner** on Thurs 19 April to discuss issues relating to the recent decision by Justice Devendra Rampersad on the **buggery law in TT**. His Grace was in Rome attending the Ad Limina Meeting of AEC Bishops.

6.14.5.12 represented His Grace at a **2-day PANCAP Conference at the Hyatt** —organised by the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP). PANCAP “provides a structured and unified approach to the Caribbean response to the HIV epidemic”. The event was a Joint Regional Dialogue with faith leaders, parliamentarians, civil society leaders, national AIDS programme managers and youth leaders. The media release issued at the end of the event and notes from a session at which only faith leaders were present, can be accessed on CCSJ’s website.

The dialogue, which came after PANCAP consultations in 2016 and 2017, included approximately 60 delegates from 14 Caribbean countries. Inter alia, the intention was to facilitate an examination of national and regional issues and goals for successfully achieving the 90-90-90 targets by 2020, and ending HIV by 2030. Hon Ayanna Webster-Roy, Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister, delivered the feature address. See the following link for my article on the Conference (on CCSJ’s Website) -<http://rcsocialjusticett.org/2.0/2018/05/06/working-towards-an-aids-free-caribbean/>. See the link also to the notes I took during a special meeting of Faith Leaders who attended the Conference. The Faith Leaders present have approved these notes: <http://rcsocialjusticett.org/2.0/2018/05/02/pancap-meeting/>

Link to the release via the PANCAP website here: <https://pancap.org/pancap-releases/joint-regional-dialogue-ends-with-call-from-stakeholders-to-create-enabling-environment-to-reduce-stigma-and-discrimination/>

It is estimated that there are 11,000 persons infected with HIV in T&T. In January 2018, it was reported that the Ministry of Health is seeking to find 1,700 people who are HIV positive and do not

know. T&T has nearly eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV, with a rate of less than two per cent. There are over 64 testing sites all over the country.

6.14.5.13 I attended a 2-day **Conference on Hidden Disabilities** – organised by CREDI. CCSJ's Chair is also a Board Member on CREDI. The issues discussed are of concern to us on CCSJ also as they relate to key social justice issues. Reports on the Conference can be accessed in Catholic News issues: 20 May and 27 May. Speakers included: His Grace; Dr Tim Conway, Neuro-psychologist and educator, Morris Center Clinics, Florida and TT; Dr. Madonna Wojtaszek-Healy, Hidden Disabilities Consultant, Illinois, USA; Ms. Kitts Cadette, Principal, Eshe's Learning Centre, TT; Dr. Launcelot Brown, Prof and Dept Chair, School of Education, Duquesne University, Pennsylvania, USA and Member of CREDI Board; Dr. Lenisa Joseph, Developmental and Early Intervention Specialist, TT; Dr. David Bratt, Paediatrician and Special Education Advocate, TT. Mr Steve Williams was the Chair of the Conference.

6.14.5.13 was interviewed by Andy Johnson on June 1 on his 1-hour long radio programme about issues relating to Migrants and Refugees and to the work of the Archdiocesan Ministry for Migrants and Refugees.

6.14.5.14 I held a meeting with Sharon Mangroo (CEBM), Tonia Gooding, Tricia Syms, Fr Matthew Ragbir, and a few Seminarians, about resources that we can use in our schools besides the UN's recommended resource on **Comprehensive Sexuality Education** (CSE). Family Watch International has prepared an 8-page analysis of the UN document, highlighting the dangers posed by the UN document. Our meeting was held in advance of a meeting with Dr Edward Green, UN and PANCAP Representative – scheduled to take place on Mon 18 June.

The challenge the Archdiocese faces is: If not CSE, then what? What do we have to put in its place? The UN is offering carrots and sticks to get countries like TT to 'buy in' to CSE. We Catholics must have something that we can offer parents and teachers/schools that will take us down, what to us, is the right path.

Tonia is working with CEBM in a number of schools introducing a programme entitled: *Alive to the World* – a series of books that focus on Character building, but they do not really address the issue of sexuality education for primary age students. A programme entitled: Teen Star is available for Secondary Schools. We all agreed that we will need to do all that we can to ensure that the Government does not buy into the UN's CSE programme.

The UNFPA in TT is pushing the CSE curriculum. We need to be able to tell the Government that we have our own programme. Under the concordat the Government cannot tell the Church what books we can introduce in our catholic schools.

His Grace asked me to approach Sr Julie Peters to see if she will produce a programme for students – 3-11 years old on human sexuality from a Catholic perspective, together with a Parents' Manual. She is willing to produce a programme. However, it's now in CEBM's 'hands' to take it forward. On 8 Dec 1995 the Pontifical Council for the Family had produced a helpful document on this issue: The truth and meaning of human sexuality. Guidelines for education within the family: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_08121995_human-sexuality_en.html

Having apprised His Grace of this issue, he wrote in one of his columns (24 June 2018) about the CSE programme and about the Church's concerns: "Parents, first teachers on human sexuality.

On Wed 4 July, CCSJ's Chair attended a meeting of the Faith-Based Network of TT (FBNTT) to discuss the Comprehensive Sexuality Education issue. Pastor Winston Mansingh is the Chair of FBNTT and he and CCSJ's Chair had co- Chaired the meeting with Dr Edward Greene (PANCAP/UN). Members wanted to ensure that everyone was on the same 'page' and would continue to present a united front.

6.14.5.15 held a meeting with Dr Greene on Mon 18 June at Archbishop's House. Persons from various Faith Communities and most of those listed in 3.12.3.15 above were involved.

Those present made it clear that we will reject CSE as it goes against the teaching of our respective Faiths. About 20 persons attended the meeting. Minutes of this meeting were taken by Pastor Winston Mansingh and CCSJ's Chair. These were circulated widely by us and by the UN Team – after ensuring that our notes were not changed in any way.

6.14.5.16 I sat in at a Media Conference - held at Archbishop's House on June 11 at 2pm . CCSJ's Chair was involved in organising the event with Greg Lal-beharie, RebuildTT, who had met with His Grace and me before the event was planned. The Media Conference involved key faith leaders, including His Grace. Faith Leaders present made clear their views on 2 topics. They requested that the Government

- change the Marriage Act (Chapter 45:01) Act 13 of 1923 as amended to ensure that it is made clear that marriage is between a BIOLOGICAL MALE, and a BIOLOGICAL FEMALE, and it must be passed by a special majority of the house - in the first session of the next parliament in September; and

- should NOT change the Equal Opportunity Act to include - "Gender" (as the EOC and EOT want to define Gender in a way that would make it 'socially constructed/fluid' - not biological. e.g. the WHO defines Gender as referring " to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed." In 2012, the then Msgr Robert Llanos and CCSJ's Chair issued a Media Release stating, inter alia:

"The Catholic Church rejects any attempt to re-define 'gender' which, as the Holy See stated at a UN meeting in March 2011, 'asserts that sexual identity can somehow be adapted indefinitely to suit new and different purposes, not recognized in international law.

“The Holy See rightly stressed that the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court contains the only binding definition of gender. This Statute states that ‘the term 'gender' refers to the two sexes, male and female, within the context of society. The term 'gender' does not indicate any meaning different from the aforementioned definition.’ We join with the Holy See to warn that ‘this agenda to re-define 'gender', in turn, calls into question the very foundation of the human rights system.”

6.14.5.17 met with Mr Oliver Alex from Mayaro, and 20 persons – mainly female retired teachers, from Mayaro on Mon 11 June at Archbishop's House to discuss social justice issues. They were pleased to be able to meet in His Grace's 'home' and in the Conference room.

6.14.5.18 met with Chantal le Hunte (daughter of a Govt. Minister) and her friend on June 12. They taped the session – seeking the Catholic Church's views on LGBTQIA issues. CCSJ's Chair shared these with them. During a second session which was held on Wed June 20 at a private school at 21 Bay Rd., St James, CCSJ's Chair engaged with them in a “social experiment” - a 2-hour long video-taped 'game' with carefully worded questions which sought to explore her views on LGBTQIA issues. The other person involved in this 'game' was a member of the LGBTQIA community and an atheist. At the end of the day, both parties had to agree to disagree on some issues.

6.14.5.19 contributed on Fri June 15 as a panellist on a panel discussion on Same sex unions – held at Our Lady of Fatima, Curepe from 5-8 pm. His Grace and Fr Matthew Ragbir were the other panellists. The event, which was organised by the Family Life Commission (AFLC), was well attended. It was clear that among the Catholics present, a number of persons belonged to the LGBTQIA community and they asked some challenging questions. His Grace emphasised the Church's teaching focusing on

respecting the dignity of each person, but making it clear that such **unions** are contrary to the teachings of the Church.

6.14.5.20 attended a meeting at Hayes Court, Anglican Bishop's Office - arranged by one Dr Anthony Greene who has lived abroad for a number of years – in the USA, and who, on his return, is seeking to effect change by drawing on the support of all faith communities. He had spoken to His Grace at CCSJ's Restorative Justice Symposium seeking his support and His Grace had asked him to contact me. The theme of his paper is: *National Love Transformation*. He believes that the strategy he outlined will help transform TT "to love again." He has good intentions but I expressed my concerns about his plans to transform society by getting everyone to research and draw their family tree. He says that during the course of doing so, the young and old will interact, there will be love again etc. CCSJ's Chair told him that CCSJ already has an action plan, and she expressed some of her views on his plan. She asked to be kept in the loop and offered to support the initiative via skype, email or telephone. After receiving minutes of 2 further meetings, it appears that the initiative may have been "shelved"?

6.14.5.21 attended a **Peace Partnership Forum** held at the Police Academy Admin Building, 1 Samaan Drive, St James on 26 June on the theme: Transforming global-local partnerships in pursuit of building durable peace. It was organised by the UNDP and Sabrina Mowlah-Baksh, who, in 2017 was one of four women selected as a Woman PeaceMaker as part of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice's (University of San Diego) Women PeaceMakers Program. During her stint there, "a Learning Compact was developed by the Women PeaceMakers and International funding agencies which sought to strengthen working relationships between donor agencies and local women led organizations. Further to this, in March of 2018 at Carnegie Corporation, a donor roundtable was hosted at Carnegie Corporation, New York as side event of CSW 2018) to further engage stakeholders on this.

"As a continuation of the Carnegie meeting in New York, a Forum in Trinidad and Tobago is part of a series of international stakeholder meetings that will be held in Afghanistan, the Philippines, the Gambia, and in Stockholm, Sweden, and Washington D.C. over the coming year."

The purpose of the Forum was "to engage stakeholders in Trinidad and Tobago to discuss the research that has been done thus far to develop the Peace Partnership Compact, and to get input from Trinidadian and Tobago civil society and international donors and partners in the country on its applicability and relevance in the Trinidadian context. As you are aware, too often well-meaning peace-building and development efforts have failed to prioritize local contexts."

The Forum allowed CCSJ's Chair to share a Catholic perspective on issues raised and to network with a number of key organisations in TT that are involved in social justice issues such as literacy, youth development, and crime prevention.

6.14.5.22 attended an inaugural 2-day national Symposium on the Family – held at University Inn and Conference Centre, St Augustine on Wed and Thurs 27 and 28 June. It was organised by The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, whose website states that it “continues to play a valuable role in nation building through its commitment to developing and building healthy, functioning families.” The Partner Host was the Division of Gender and Child Affairs, Office of the Prime Minister.

The theme of the event was: “**Supporting Families as the Bedrock of our Society**”. It incorporated “the official launch of a National Values, Attitudes and Behaviours Campaign for Trinidad and Tobago, which is key to fostering family life and driving sustainable social development.” It also included “valuable networking opportunities, fora and discussion groups, speaker presentations, workshops as well as an exhibition showcasing organizations, groups and agencies that support the family...

“The Ministry is developing a suite of social policies that are intended to impact directly on the functioning of families and vulnerable groups. It is therefore also critical that the Ministry engender national discussions on issues relevant to the development of these policy frameworks.

These policies include:

- National Parenting Policy
- National Family Policy of Trinidad and Tobago
- National Policy for Persons with Disabilities
- National Policy on Ageing
- National Poverty Reduction Strategy. (<http://www.social.gov.tt/family-symposium/>)

The Symposium focused on five (5) major thematic areas:

- Understanding Family Processes and Challenges
- Family life in the new Age
- Men in Families
- Supportive Family Relationships
- Promoting Resilient Families

The Symposium was attended by over 350 participants, comprising representatives from Government Ministries and agencies, civil society organizations, faith-based and community organizations, NGOs and the business community.

Several members of the public including teachers, students and interest groups were also present. The event also attracted over 14 exhibitors which ranged from UNICEF, ChildLine and Lifeline, to the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Village and Community Councils (TTAVCC) and BOMA-TT.

The Symposium booklet can be downloaded via this link: <http://www.social.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Family-Symposium-Programme-PRINT-BOOKLET-F.A.W..pdf>

*****It is to be noted that during the course of the Symposium, there was an “undercurrent” of statements being made by some about reproductive rights. UNFPA is pressing ahead with its agenda, and many are “buying” into it. See the Express report on Mon Sept 17, 2018:**

Tobago agree to sexual and reproductive rights framework Sep 17, 2018

(The photo used had the caption: Dianne Baker-Henry, Administrator in the Division of Health, Wellness and Family Development delivers welcome remarks at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Division of Health, Wellness and Family Development and the Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago, on Monday.

The Division of Health, Wellness and Family Development (DHWFD) at the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) and the Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago (FPATT) agreed to a framework for the promotion, protection and fulfillment of sexual and reproductive health and rights for men, women and young people in Tobago.

On Monday, the parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the Division's Head Office, Wilson Road, Scarborough, Tobago. (photo with the foll. Caption:

Ingrid Melville, Chairman of the TRHA; Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, President of FPATT; Councillor Dr. Agatha Carrington, Secretary of Health, Wellness and Family Development; Dianne Baker-Henry, Administrator in the Division of Health, Wellness and Family Development, and Dona Da Costa Martinez, Executive Director of FPATT, sign the MOU on behalf of their respective organisation.

The MOU will establish an agreed framework for the coordinated operation of FPATT, DHWDF and the Tobago Regional Health Authority, in achieving their duties and statutory obligations regarding

the establishment of a sexual and reproductive health programme in Tobago. Councillor Dr Agatha Carrington, Secretary of Health, Wellness and Family Development; Dianne Baker-Henry, Administrator in the Division of Health, Wellness and Family Development; Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, President of FPATT and Dona Da Costa Martinez, Executive Director of FPATT all expressed their delight with the agreement and made a commitment to fulfill their respective roles within the partnership, to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights for men, women and young people in Tobago.”

6.14.5.23 addressed a gathering at the Raja Yoga Centre, Sackville St., POS, on Fri 21 Sept I on the theme for International Day of Peace which fell on 21 Sept. The theme was: “The Right to Peace - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 70”. CCSJ Chair’s presentation has been uploaded on CCSJ’s website under *speeches and presentations*.

6.14.5.24 was a panellist at an event organised by Pauline Phelps and team - **Billings Ovulation Method Association of Trinidad & Tobago** (BOMA-TT) on Fri 12 October at St Dominic’s Pastoral Centre (St Finbar’s RC Church). Before the panel discussion participants viewed the Premiere Screening of a film entitled: 'Sexual Revolution – 50 Years since *Humanae Vitae*'. Sadly, the event did not draw a large crowd as on that same evening, there was a candlelight procession around the Savannah, organised by Living Water Community to pray for peace and nonviolence in our Nation.

6.14.5.25 attended the launch of **Justice Through a Gender Lens: Gender Equality Protocol for Judicial Officers** – at the Radisson Hotel, POS on 27 November. This is “a practical guide geared towards fostering and improving gender sensitive adjudication in Trinidad and Tobago.

“A project by the Judiciary of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Judicial Education Institute of Trinidad and Tobago (JEITT), The JURIST Project, UN Women, the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers, the Caribbean Court of Justice, and the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Women Judges, this Protocol combines a social and historical framework, international treaty principles, local legislation mandates, and regional and local case law to provide key and critical instructions to ensure that each step of adjudication and proceedings, especially in particular types of matters, is analysed through a lens of equality and non-discrimination. The Gender Equality Protocol for Judicial Officers also includes the Procedural Fairness perspective, based on the JEITT’s research, to ground and inform the fair and equal treatment of users of the court systems and to secure public trust and confidence in the justice system.”

6.15 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. Some advocacy work include the following:

6.15.1 on Mon 12 November CCSJ's Chair met with Ms Zola Simmons. She spent 5 and ½ years in TT's Women's Prison and was acquitted of murder in March 2018. She has launched an NGO entitled: *Joint Force Action Anti-Crime initiative of Change, T&T* and would like CCSJ's Chair, to become a Board Member of her NGO. While CCSJ's Chair is unable to comply with this request, due to time constraints, she is supporting the NGO in a number of ways.

For example, CCSJ's Chair met with Ms Simmons and her team and the Cmr of Prisons at his Office in POS on December 18, to discuss some of the challenges women in prison face in TT, and to plan for the launch of the NGO. He had kindly offered to host it at his Quarters at the Maximum Security Prison. CCSJ's Chair was the feature speaker at the launch of the NGO at the Cmr. of Prison's Quarters on December 29, 2018. She has also arranged for Ms Simmons to appear on Alloy Youk See's, and Andy Johnston's Radio programme to promote the work of the NGO. These women – all former inmates, want to give back to society. CCSJ will continue to support the group of women.

The women have found a "friend" in Topeka K. Sam, a former inmate in the USA, "Founder and Executive Director of *The Ladies of Hope Ministries* whose mission is to help disenfranchised and marginalized women and girls transition back into society through resources and access to high-quality education, entrepreneurship, spiritual empowerment, advocacy and housing." She was present at the launch on 29 December and has been sending containers of toiletries from the USA for the women in TT's prison. She hopes to build a facility in Sangre Grande for former female inmates. Land has already been secured for this initiative.

6.15.2 On 15 November, CCSJ's Chair met with Ms Saira La Foucade. His Grace had referred her to CCSJ's Chair so that she could assist her in establishing an NGO. She has a son who has autism and,

having observed the challenges some children/youth face in Church, she formed “the *Bethesda Catholic Community (BCC)*, which offers Catechism and sensory- friendly masses/services for children with disabilities. BCC celebrated its **third anniversary** July 8 2018. The name ‘Bethesda’ means ‘house of mercy’ or ‘house of grace’ and is the place Christ where healed a paralyzed man beside the Pool of Siloam.

An article on the work in which she is engaged states:“Bethesda promotes the inclusion of special-needs people into church life, while providing moral support and advice to their families. The community prepared eight young people to receive first Communion at a June 2017 ceremony and is in the process of assembling a second group, as well as a confirmation class... Bethesda trains volunteers to assist those who need support, including occupying distracted children and, even adults, leaving caregivers free to focus on the liturgy. A sign language interpreter is also present and will sit beside a deaf person or in common view should there be more than one person needing the service.

“Anything for inclusivity. And visibility. Now sensory-friendly Masses are held monthly at two locations in east and south Trinidad.” See article about Saira and her Ministry – in the Catholic Register: <https://www.catholicregister.org/home/international/item/27681-trinidad-church-aims-for-inclusion-of-sensory-challenged-disabled-parishioners> (13 July 2018).

His Grace allocated 10 acres of land in Todds Rd. to this Organisation to build a facility for persons with disabilities. CCSJ’s Chair held a further meeting with her and with one of her team members and she continues to give her advice that aims to assist them in achieving their goals.

6.15.3: On 18 December, CCSJ’s Chair met with His Grace and Gregory Delzin, Attorney-at-Law, to discuss issues relating to the **criminal justice system**, in particular: *conditions in our prisons, bail and its impact on the poor, delay in the administration of justice – including a consideration of Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Harris’ Petition for mercy* for those who have spent longer on Remand than they would have spent in prison if they had been tried, convicted and handed down the maximum sentence for the crimes for which they have been charged. His Grace will take certain actions to take this issue forward.

7.0 CCSJ’s land in San Raphael and the TTRF/APRC (Trinidad and Tobago Reintegration Foundation/Anthony Pantin Reintegration Centre): Note that since Clive Belgrave’s death, the work of TTRF/APRC ceased and the Company is defunct. The land on which the facility is “built” belongs to CCSJ. At a meeting arranged by Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Harris with CCSJ’s Chair and Br Rudolph Boneo, President of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP), in 2018, it was agreed that

the land in San Raphael would be transferred to SVP by a Deed of Gift so that SVP could plant crops to service their various charitable facilities. Although the Deed had been executed, SVP was unable to Register it. There are problems that Timothy Hamel-Smith, Attorney-at-Law, is seeking to address. Further information will be shared at the AGM.

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.

NB: 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)

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

BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE

“Archbishop Jason Gordon has called on Catholics to put aside their fears, trust in the guidance of Mary and become saints. He believes through personal conversion, respect for others can be restored and change will occur in Trinidad and Tobago...Catholics should live as ‘beloved disciples’ taking Mary into their home and asking for the grace needed for conversion of hearts. Archbishop Gordon said, ‘The salvation of our nation will come from depths of Christian living in obedience to our Lord and do whatever He asks.’

“He said people must pray for police and prison personnel on the frontline in restoring law and order in the country because they put their lives in peril every day and were facing ‘mounted attack’. Archbishop Gordon commented that the mayhem the country is experiencing was due to the stronghold, i.e. the criminal elements being ‘rattled’.

“‘We must pray for conversion of hearts’...in following the will of the Lord, and doing whatever Mary asked, the nation could not be the same. ‘It will be changed; it is being changed. And a renewal will come to our land and something of a new springtime will well up and something of a new hope will emerge and people will see the salvation of our God,’ he said.

“To build a culture of peace, non-violence has to begin at the individual level. He said this was the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in the profound respect she has shown. Archbishop Gordon suggested the challenge facing Catholics was not external—the violence in society, but the unbelief within.”(August 22, 2019, Catholic News).

“We are tragically turning to violence in the search for quick and easy answers to complex human problems. A society which destroys its children, abandons its old and relies on vengeance fails fundamental moral tests. Violence is not the solution; it is the most clear sign of our failures. We are losing our respect for human life.” Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1994.



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