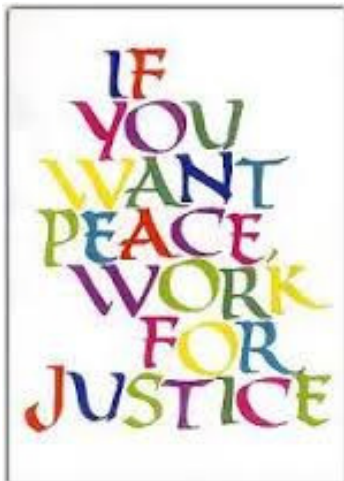
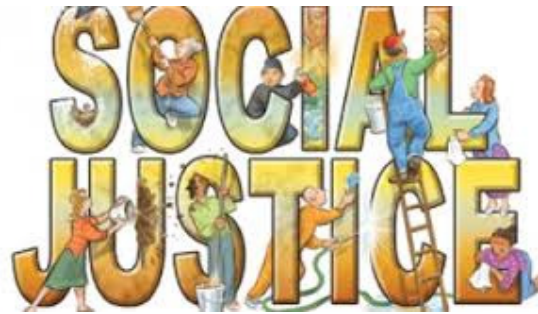




**CCSJ'S 2015 LENTEN REFLECTIONS
ON
KEY SOCIAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES**





**Introduction by Leela Ramdeen,
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My brothers and sisters, as we journey through Lent this year, let us use this opportunity to deepen our faith and to renew our resolve to be true witnesses to Christ. But we can only be true witnesses if we know what it means to be “Catholic.” Unless we define ourselves based on our *Catholic Culture and Identity*, we may be lured by the vagaries of modern society. “We cannot be called truly “Catholic” unless we hear and heed the Church's call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace.” (*Communities of Salt and Light, U.S. Bishops, 1993*).

The Catholic Church has a vision and mission that will help us transform ourselves, our communities, and the world so that Truth, Justice, Peace, Love and Freedom will prevail, as divinely ordained by God. We are all Missionaries in our Church. However, too often we allow the secular world to influence the way in which we live and our hearts grow cold to the needs of our neighbour. Read Pope Francis' Lenten Message for 2015, which reflects on the theme: “***Make your hearts firm***” (James 5:8). He condemns what he calls “the globalization of indifference” to the pain and suffering of others. In his Message, the Holy Father asks us to reflect on 3 biblical texts:

1. “If one member suffers, all suffer together” (1 Corinthians 12:26) – The Church
2. “Where is your brother?” (Genesis 4:9) – Parishes and Communities
3. “Make your hearts firm!” (James 5:8) – Individual Christians.

Our credibility and authenticity as people of faith depend on the way in which we live our lives and give witness to the teachings of our faith. We have a duty, as Catholics, to SEE, JUDGE, and ACT. To do this effectively, we need to inform our consciences and develop our awareness of the teachings of our Church. The reflections contained in this booklet should raise our awareness of what it means to be Catholic.

CCSJ shares with you some reflections on key social justice themes: The Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Call to Family, Community, Participation and the Common Good; Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; Rights and Responsibilities; the Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers; Solidarity; Care for God's Creation; the Role of Government and Subsidiarity; and the Promotion of Peace.

May the Holy Spirit help us to live our faith so that our concern for social justice will be transformed into constructive action as we spread the Good News in TT/the world.

REFLECTIONS ON KEY SOCIAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

The Life and Dignity of the Human Person



“Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7)

Imagine for a moment The Lord of heaven and earth taking the time to fashion Adam out of the dust of the ground. Imagine God working like a master potter to form and shape the man.

Picture God’s eyes as they pay attention to every single detail, and see those eyes as they are filled with joy and love as His creation takes form. Imagine God looking at His work of art with a smile. Then, God realises that it was great but it was missing one thing, the breath of life! And so God breathed it into the man’s nostrils. This wasn’t done for the rest of creation, so we humans are special!

It is this special nature that is at the heart of our social teaching. Every human person from the moment of conception to natural death is God’s work of art, dust and breath – made in His image and likeness and redeemed by the blood of Christ! And because of this they are worthy of our respect and support. So, today let us pray, fast, and give alms in a way that affirms each person’s special nature as God’s work of art.

Just as your life is important to you, the life of every person on this planet is of worth. As Christians we are compelled to see Christ in everyone - not only in those we love or those who seem worthy of being protected, but in EVERYONE. Imagine for a minute if the image of Christ appeared every time we looked at our brothers and sisters - will we treat them differently? I am certain that we will. We must believe that every person is of worth in spite of his/her perceived condition; and that people are more important than possessions/things. The true measure of every institution depends on whether its policies and practices threaten or enhance the life and dignity of the human person.

As a Christian I see myself first of all as a "Child of God". I was made in his image and likeness, I was redeemed by Jesus Christ and I am called to be in communion with God. The dignity that I have comes from God. Nobody can take that away from me. It doesn't matter whether I'm rich or poor, whether I live in Beetham or Westmoorings, it's mine. It's a permanent part of my being.

But I am called to live with other people too, because they also have dignity. When you think of dignity, you have to think of your duties to God, your neighbour and also to yourself. The permanent character of my dignity is essentially linked to the dignity of other people. We are connected. And our dignity is connected. If their dignity is trampled upon, mine becomes tarnished.

At the foundation of Catholic social teaching is the inherent, inalienable and inviolable dignity of the human person. This dignity emphasises that all persons are created equal and the life of each one is sacred. Our response to all the threats to life is a moral test for our

nation. We must renew our resolve to defend and promote life in every phase as a blessing and a precious gift from God, never to be sacrificed, never to be compromised.

Although human dignity is a permanent part of our character, given by God, it is also a goal, an achievement. This means that we must constantly be seeking to realize our human dignity. There is a lot of work to be done at parish level to nurture and sustain human dignity. We need to teach people what human dignity means. Dr. J. Brian Benestad rightly says in his essay on *Gaudium et Spes*: "Christians continually achieve or *perfect* their dignity by seeking the truth, resisting sin, practicing virtue, and repenting when they succumb to temptation." He also noted Pope Leo XII's statement in *Rerum novarum*: "True dignity and excellence in men and women resides in moral living, that is, in virtue."

Our vocation is to be holy. Our Church provides us with a framework of morals and values. Let us live our lives within this framework. The principle of human dignity is the bedrock of all our justice and peace work. When there are little or no morals in society, we soon find ourselves going down the slippery slope.

Human dignity extends from the moment of conception to natural death – at all stages and in all circumstances. Thus, discrimination of any kind violates the dignity of the person whether it is in terms of: religion, ethnicity, class, economic status, age, gender, abilities or disabilities - and so does any form of degradation such as abuse, violence, sexual or economic slavery.

St Augustine said "Justice is giving people what is their due". We live in a nation where, in spite of our wealth, people's basic needs are not being met. This impacts adversely on their dignity. The economy should work for all our people. Many do not have basic amenities such as water, education, roads, electricity, health care, food, shelter. That is what we are all 'due' if we are to promote human dignity.

Pope Paul VI said, in his encyclical "On the development of Peoples": "Development is a new name for peace". Human development is critical. Respect for the human person means more than "feeding hungry belly". Human development sees the person as a whole. Each person needs to develop spiritually, physically, socially, culturally, mentally, politically, and educationally - it's *the whole person!* And unless we link justice to all these aspects of the person, there will never be wholeness; there will never be peace. If you want peace work for human dignity, work for justice.

In our world today, where human life and dignity seem to be devalued, denigrated and degraded, let us first of all respect our own dignity and worth as children of God, redeemed by Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and in turn extend that respect to our brothers and sisters in Christ – both locally and globally. A key obstacle to TT's/the world's development is corruption at various levels of societies. Corruption deprives citizens of fundamental human rights; to the monies that should be used to lift the living standards of our people; it deprives them of the resources of the land which should be used to enhance their lives and enable them to realise their potential; it sometimes deprive them of their lives. Individuals/Families cannot thrive where corruption exists.

We have much work to do to create communities that value and promote the dignity of each human person; communities that respect life and that work to create conditions that will enable each person to realise his/her potential.

“‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:31).

Prayer: Lord, as I step out into the world today may I be reminded of my dignity as Your prized creation; May I celebrate this dignity in all that I think, say and do; May I help others to know that they too are gifts, And may I respect and defend each person as Your precious work of art. I ask this through Christ, Your Son. Amen.

Call to Family, Community, Participation and the Common Good



“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27

“Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’” (Genesis 2:18)

“...Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:23-24)

Adam finally finds a helper in Eve. He sees in her an equal, and someone he can share an exclusive, loving relationship with. The author of Genesis even goes on to link “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” with the call to marriage and family life.

From the very beginning God intended for us to live in families and to express love through the marital bond; but, as we know, many people do not experience marriage and family life as a loving and life-giving union of persons.

We were made for relationship! In the beginning God saw that it wasn’t good for Adam to be alone. There was a need for the Man to have another to share life with and love. This longing for another is felt by every human person. We all want relationship and to know that we are not alone.

It is based on this longing that the Church calls on each person to live in solidarity with all of humanity. Solidarity challenges each of us to fight against indifference and isolation; it calls us to always be concerned for the other, no matter how far away they are because it is never good for anyone to feel alone!

Do you see yourself as a helper to others? Is your heart open to the pain and plight of those around you and the wider community and in the global village? How can you be more aware of what is happening around you, and more importantly, how can you respond?

No matter the continent, no matter the culture, no matter the era, human beings seek out each other in community. We gather to celebrate life; we gather to mourn those we lose; and we gather to worship. Humans are social creatures; it is our nature to be so. While we seem to embrace our individuality more than ever, we also understand that we are members of a group. It is imperative that we be both: the human race can only survive if its individual

members survive, and the individual needs the group to enhance its own chances of survival. There is a tightly interwoven connection among all human beings and this should define all that we do. **The family** is the first example of this. As the US Bishops said: “The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined.”

The Catholic Church believes that "marriage is a faithful, exclusive and lifelong union between one man and one woman, joined as husband and wife in an intimate partnership of life and love." Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI warned on 9 March 2012 about “the powerful political and cultural currents seeking to alter the legal definition of marriage... marriage and the family are institutions that must be promoted and defended from every possible misrepresentation of their true nature. The contemporary crisis of marriage and the family, has led to grave societal problems bearing an immense human and economic cost.”

Reflect on the content of our Catholic Catechism: paras 2207 – 2211: THE FAMILY AND SOCIETY. Mother Teresa’s words are sound. She said: “What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family.” It is because of a lack of love that there is so much injustice against The Family today. Many families in our country and in our world are in crisis - in both rich and poor countries. Human life and human dignity are being compromised daily. Family life and values are often debased. The negative aspects of individualism and materialism have impacted on family life.

Every person has the right to raise a family and the duty to support them. In 1981 Pope St. John Paul II released an apostolic exhortation called: The Christian Family in the Modern World. In it, he made some very profound statements. He said: “...the family is the primary and most vital foundation of society, the first school of social virtue...As the family goes, so goes the nation and so goes the whole world in which we live.”

He highlighted the importance of family love: “...the essence and the role of the family are in the final analysis specified by love. Hence the family has as its mission to guard, reveal and communicate love...” It is parents who are charged with communicating this love of God and of neighbour to their children. It is only through love that that community of people called “the family” can promote the full development of personhood in each member. In his Letter to Families (1994), the Pope rightly stated that the family “remains a social institution that neither can nor should be replaced: it is the ‘sanctuary of life.’”

Pope Francis has referred to the family as “the engine of the world and of history”. “The family”, he said, “is a community of life which has its autonomous foundation.” As Blessed John Paul II wrote in the Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio, the family is not the sum of the persons that constitute it, but a ‘community of persons’ (cf. Nos. 17-18). It is the place where one learns to love, the natural centre of human life. It is made up of faces, of persons who love, talk, sacrifice for others and defends life, especially the most fragile, the weakest. Pope Francis reminds us that “the family is founded on matrimony... the truly Christian families are recognized by their fidelity, patience, openness to life, respect of the elderly.”

Our Catechism tells us that: “The family must be helped and defended by appropriate social measures. Where families cannot fulfil their responsibilities, other social bodies have the duty of helping them and of supporting the institution of the family...The importance of the family for the life and well-being of society entails a particular responsibility for society to support and strengthen marriage and the family. Civil authority should consider it a grave duty ‘to acknowledge the true nature of marriage and the family, to protect and foster them, to safeguard public morality, and promote domestic prosperity.’ The political community has a duty to honour the family, to assist it...”(CCC 2209, 2210, 2211).

Let us pray for marriages and families that are struggling. Let us also ask the Lord to show us how we can support hurting marriages and families around us. Let us renew our commitment to our own marriages and families and strive always to see the other as a gift and opportunity for true relationship.

Community: As the poet, John Donne, said, “No man is an island.” Individuals and families exist in communities. In fact, globally, we are all connected. Today, more than ever, there is greater interdependence between individuals and peoples. Indeed, we realise our vocation in relation to others. “Just as each of our bodies has several parts and each part has a separate function, so all of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it we belong to each other.” Paul’s Letter to the Romans

Participation: The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church states that “participation” is one of the pillars of a democratic system. Our identity as Catholics and the continuity of our Church depends on our participation in society. We must see it as a right and a duty to participate in society, so we can seek out together the common good and well-being of all, with love and compassion – especially as regards the poor and vulnerable.

Participation in the economic, political, and cultural life of society is a human right. This is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community. Participation allows for voices to be heard and recognised. Such participation allows for the further development of community/society as it makes room for change and continued progress. Exclusion of any person or group based on any pretence of differing beliefs, ethnicity, economic status or otherwise is wrong. It means that the excluded ones are being treated as non-persons or non-human beings and this exclusion violates their human dignity. Created in the image of God, we are all equal and so share equally in the conduct of the affairs in our society and nation. St Paul tells us that we are no longer slaves, we are better than slaves, we are brothers and sisters and as such we are heirs (Philemon 1:16; Galatians 4:7). So we share the same kinship and inheritance as brothers and sisters and are entitled to participate fully in the life of our nation.

Common good: “It grows increasingly true that the obligations of justice and love are fulfilled only if each person, contributing to the common good, according to his own abilities and the needs of others, also promotes and assists the public and private institutions dedicated to bettering the conditions of human life” (The Church in the Modern World, 1965, 30).

Our Catechism tells us that the “common good” is “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more

easily.” The common good concerns the life of all. It calls for prudence from each, and even more from those who exercise the office of authority.” (CCC: para 1906).

Promoting the common good requires us to respect the rights of individuals, respect the rights of groups in community/ society and peace - “that is, the stability and security of a just order” (CCC: para 1909). This notion continues the recognition of human dignity as sacred and sanctified as we move from the general (society) to the more specific (public authorities). Public authorities are expected to respect and encourage the rights of the person and society to food, shelter, clothing, education, culture, safety and security and rightful freedom, especially with respect to religion.

“The common good is always oriented towards the progress of persons: ‘The order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons, and not the other way around.’ This order is founded on truth, built up in justice, and animated by love.” (CCC: para 1912)

It means that we as citizens and residents have a participatory role in ensuring that the common good is preserved and maintained by becoming active in the affairs of our nation. But it also implies a certain synergy - that the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts: that together as the body of Christ we can bring unity and wholeness back to our communities and country.

What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like. - Saint Augustine

Prayer: Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You Made me after Your own likeness - to live in relationship with you, with others and with creation. Help me to live in peace, love, and unity with all of my brothers and sisters and with creation- By living as a true helper and partner to all.

Lord, today I bring before You all marriages and families that are in pain and are unable to respect and affirm the dignity of their members. Renew in them the ability to see each other as a gift. Give them the grace and courage to live and love as one in You. I ask this through Christ, the Lord. Amen.



Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

"If someone who has the riches of this world sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 Jn 3:17).

“Please, sir, may I have some more?” This quotation is taken from the nineteenth century novel, *Oliver Twist*, by Charles Dickens. The novel portrays the miserable existence of an orphan boy and also highlights the exploitation of the poor in society. This simple line sums up the

reality for many in our society/world today. . Poverty/exploitation of the poor and other vulnerable members of our society remains a blemish on the tapestry of humanity. Although we are living in a time of abundance and technological advancements, humans still struggle

for equitable distribution of the earth's resources. Many are still waiting for their slice of the pie, most of which pie seem to be possessed by a few, leaving others with their hands out pleading for some/'more'. Many live like Lazarus, on the margins of society. In a world marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our Catholic faith calls on its faithful to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable high on our agenda.

Poverty and social exclusion is rampant. Pope Emeritus Benedict reminded us in his encyclical: *God is Love*, #20, that: "Within the community of believers there can never be room for a poverty that denies anyone what is needed for a dignified life." If we say we love God and our neighbour, what are we doing to assist, for example, the poor, the weak, the oppressed, the hungry, the sick, the shut-ins, the needy, the abused, the victims of crime, and the disabled in our community/society/world? Are we seeing Christ in their faces?

"Everyone has the right to possess a sufficient amount of the earth's goods for themselves and their family. This has been the opinion of the Fathers and Doctors of the church, who taught that people are bound to come to the aid of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods." (*Gaudium et Spes* - "The Church in the Modern World"), Vatican II, 1965, #69).

As Matthew (25:31-46) tells us, on Judgment day, we will be held accountable for how we treated the 'least' of our brothers and sisters among us. The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy urge us to address the needs of others.

The US Bishops tell us in 'Economic Justice for All', 1986, #86, #87, #88: "The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation...As individuals and as a nation, therefore, we are called to make a fundamental 'option for the poor'. The obligation to evaluate social and economic activity from the viewpoint of the poor and the powerless arises from the radical command to love one's neighbour as one's self. Those who are marginalized and whose rights are denied have privileged claims if society is to provide justice for all. This obligation is deeply rooted in Christian belief...

"The prime purpose of this special commitment to the poor is to enable them to become active participants in the life of society. It is to enable all persons to share in and contribute to the common good. The 'option for the poor,' therefore, is not an adversarial slogan that pits one group or class against another. Rather it states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community. The extent of their suffering is a measure of how far we are from being a true community of persons. These wounds will be healed only by greater solidarity with the poor and among the poor themselves."

It is our privilege and honour to serve those who cannot return the favour – to satisfy their hunger and thirst: physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological; to bind their wounds: wounds of suffering and despair; to clothe their nakedness of desperation and humiliation; to offer comfort and companionship; to take action to dismantle unjust structures that keep people trapped in a cycle of poverty and social exclusion; and to promote distributive, social, restorative and economic justice.

The calypsonian, The Mighty Shadow, reminded us in a calypso that “Poverty is hell!”. Our Church asks us to have a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. This Lent let us not just “give charity”; let us find creative ways also to teach people how to fish, instead of giving them a fish.

“Make us worthy, Lord, to serve those people throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger.” Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

Prayer: Father of the poor, I turn to You today to ask your mercy on all who suffer and cannot provide for themselves. Help me to be the hands and feet of Christ that reach out to help Your children. Show me how I can help to bring an end to poverty in my community, in my country and in this world. I ask this through Christ, the Lord. Amen.

Prayer: Loving God, you make us in your image.

Forgive us when we fail to see your image in each other,
when we give in to greed and indifference
when we do not question the systems that are life-denying.
As we are made in your image,
let us live in your image
and be Christ-like
in service, endurance and love.
Amen (Christian Aid).



“The LORD God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’” (Genesis 2:16-17)

Adam had it real nice! Talk about buffet! He could freely eat everything, except the fruit from one tree. Eating from the tree God told Adam not to eat from would result in death. As we would learn later, it would not be an immediate physical death, but a spiritual and internal one. This scenario reminds me of our call to balance rights and responsibilities in life. We have a right to many important things like food, shelter, education, participation, etc., but, like Adam, it is not just about acting on our rights freely; we must take into account our responsibilities to God, neighbour, and our environment before acting on these rights. There are things we should and should not do to honour the rights we have. For Adam it was to not eat, for us it could be to respect time, be responsible about work and school, etc. It is when we do not do these things that we too experience some form of death in our lives. So, today, what are the responsibilities that you need to pay more attention to? What tree are you eating from?

To protect human rights is to ensure that people receive some degree of decent, humane treatment. To violate the most basic human rights, is to deny individuals their fundamental moral entitlements. It is, in a sense, to treat them as if they are less than human and

undeserving of respect and dignity. Human rights are built upon human dignity, which comes from the fact that man and woman are made in the image and likeness of God and are called to communion with God.

We built our foundation of Catholic Social Teaching on human dignity and started adding the blocks to the building (Body of Christ) with Community and The Common Good. Our next layer is Rights and Responsibilities. Pope St. John XXIII reminded us in his encyclical: Peace on Earth, that: “The common good is chiefly guaranteed when personal rights and duties are maintained ... Those, therefore, who claim their own rights, yet altogether forget or neglect to carry out their respective duties, are people who build with one hand and destroy with the other” (60). Or, as Pope Paul VI said: “It is too easy to throw back on others responsibilities for injustices, if at the same time one does not realize how each one shares in it personally, and how personal conversion is needed first.”

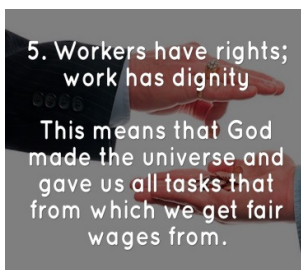
Our Catechism (paras 1734, 1740) reminds us that: “Freedom makes man *responsible* for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary. Progress in virtue, knowledge of the good, and the exercise of self-discipline enhance the mastery of the will over its acts... The exercise of freedom does not imply a right to say or do everything. (Catechism: 1734, 1740).

And St. Pope John Paul II words are instructive: “Every generation needs to know that freedom consists not in doing what we like but in having the right to do what we ought.”

With rights come responsibilities: the freedom to choose. Freedom is not the ticket to unbridled behaviour, but rather it is the doorway of choice. We are free to choose our path in life, our vocation - keeping in mind that our choices have consequences. Choosing one path means that another is closed – temporarily or permanently. It is possible to return or restart not at the beginning but along the way - but in choosing, love must be first in primacy. Freedom must be grounded in love: healthy self-love, love for others, love for God and love for creation. The model and example of such freedom grounded in love is, of, course, Jesus Christ.

“As all human beings are, in my view, creatures of God's design, we must respect all other human beings. That does not mean I have to agree with their choices or agree with their opinions, but indeed I respect them as human beings.” (Stockwell Day)

Prayer: God of love, I am grateful for all of Your blessings. Help me to show my gratitude by dutifully living out my rights and the responsibilities that go with them. I ask this through Christ, the Lord. Amen.



The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

“Treating workers as mere tools does no justice to their personal dignity...workers’ rights cannot be doomed to be the mere result of economic systems aimed at maximum profits. The thing that must shape the whole economy is respect for the workers’ rights within each country and all through the world’s economy... Work is in the

first place “for the worker” and not the worker “for work.” Work itself “can have greater or lesser objective value, but all work should be judged by the measure of dignity given to the person who carries it out” (Laborem Exercens – On Human Work: John Paul II).

Catholic social teaching provides a moral vision and a foundation of ethical principles upon which to build the struggle for workers’ rights and economic justice.

Our scriptures tell us that we must work to provide for ourselves and our families. Therefore, God is telling us that we must participate in his creation by working.

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” (Genesis 2:15). The garden provided all that Adam and Eve would need for life. It was given as a gift to them. All God asked was that they take care of the garden.

What is the purpose of work? Pope John Paul II expresses it clearly, “Work is a good thing for man -a good thing for his humanity - because through work man ... achieves fulfilment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes ‘more a human being’”(Laborem Exercens, 9). We are called then not to see work just as a means to the end of getting a salary. Work is an essential part of being human; all then are called to work, using their God-given talents in whatever way they can.

What is your attitude towards work? Why do you work, if you do? Why do you want a job? Is it for the pay or is it to live out your humanity? The dignity of work allows for individuals within society to participate in its growth, to build strong economies, to be productive and to contribute to the betterment of all. If the dignity of work is to be secured, then the basic rights of workers must be respected, for example, the right to decent and fair wages, to be able to organize and join unions and to be able to work in decent conditions. Our God-given talents allows all of us to contribute to our community/world to promote the common good.

Promoting the dignity of work and rights of workers is closely linked to the dignity of each human person. The church has produced a number of encyclicals and documents on this topic. In Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* – On the Conditions of Labour, the Holy Father, inter alia, supported the rights of labour to form unions and outlined some of the rights and duties of both workers and employers.

“As the Church solemnly reaffirmed in the recent Council, ‘the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person.’ All people have the right to work, to a chance to develop their qualities and their personalities in the exercise of their professions, to equitable remuneration which will enable them and their families ‘to lead a worthy life on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level’ and to assistance in case of need arising from sickness or age.” *A Call to Action (Octogesima Adveniens. . . #14).*

Work is necessary for human development and participation in society and such work must be justly remunerated. Unemployment or underemployment undermines the social fabric of the individual, family and community. Allied to this is the freedom to form associations such as labour unions and cooperatives.

In our quest for a more just society, it is imperative that we remove barriers that stand as obstacles to the rights of workers. It is important to note, also, as stated in the US Bishops’

document, Economic Justice for All, that “along with the rights of workers and unions go a number of important responsibilities. Individual workers have obligations to their employers, and trade unions also have duties to society as a whole. Union management in particular carries a strong responsibility for the good name of the entire union movement.”

On several occasions Pope Francis has spoken out on the rights of workers, e.g. see his Catechesis on the Feast of St Joseph the Worker (May 1, 2013). Inter alia, he spoke about societies that put company profits above human dignity or even human life.

Pope Francis said on the dignity of work: "When society is organized in such a way that not everyone has the opportunity to work, to be anointed with the dignity of work, then there is something wrong with that society: it is not right! It goes against God himself, who wanted our dignity, starting from here."

Prayer: Lord, our God, from the very beginning You appointed humanity to work. Help me to have the right attitude towards working and income. Help me to work well, and offer my best at all time, so that I may give glory to your name. Lead employers to act justly towards their employees. I ask this in the name of Jesus, Your Son, and the carpenter from Nazareth. Amen.



WE ARE ALL PART OF GODS FAMILY.

WE SHOULD DO WHAT WE CAN TO MAKE LIFE BETTER FOR OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS AROUND THE WORLD.

Solidarity

“Solidarity is a call to recognise each individual person as a part of one human family.” Pope Paul VI.

Why should it matter to us what is happening to others? The simple answer is we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Catholic Social Teaching sees “Solidarity” as a moral and social virtue. “This is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people both far and near. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all” (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 38).

One of the key themes in Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est (God is Love)*, is “solidarity”. He reminds us of the parable of the Good Samaritan and of the Last Judgement as outlined in Matthew 25. Our neighbour is anyone who has need of us. And we must stand in solidarity with the ‘least’ among us. If we truly love God, we will see Him in our neighbour whom we must also love.

Solidarity is determination to commit oneself to a universal common good, because, globally, we have a common humanity – we are one human family and are all equal in the sight of God – made in His image and likeness, redeemed by the blood of Christ and called to be in communion with Him. Solidarity helps us see other people and nations as all part of the human family. We can connect and unite with others in their triumphs and their pain. We can unite to make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters for we share the same Father. Our Catholic teaching often challenges us to redefine our concept of neighbour, remembering always that every person, regardless of how different he/she might seem to be

from us, is also a child of God, and therefore our brother or sister. Love of neighbour is inseparable from love of God. “Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic, and ideological differences. We are called to work globally for justice.” www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/

After Cain killed his brother Abel, and God asked Cain where his brother was, the response was: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4: 9). The answer is a resounding “YES!” We are one human family and we are all responsible for all.

Solidarity means that "loving our neighbour" is not only for those in our vicinity or community or for those whom we like but solidarity has global implications in our interdependent world. It means being concerned for people where ever they live.

In the Gospel of John we are told that Jesus wept with Martha and Mary at the death of their brother, Lazarus. He felt compassion and solidarity with them in their grief and was moved to do something to ease their pain. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and restored him to his family. We may not be able to accomplish such a feat, but we are called to lift people from their places of ‘death’ – places of suffering, grief, despair, loss - through our actions and our prayers. Through solidarity, we can build a culture of life; we can promote good local and international relations, harmony, justice and peace.

We are reminded in Galatians (3:27-28): “for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Prayer: O Creator, Our world is large, and yet the global community is so fragile. We glimpse the needs of our sisters and brothers, and those needs are great. We want to turn away, but you call us back. We want simple solutions, but you want us to help solve the complex problems. Through your church, you call us to listen, to learn, to reflect and to act. Give us a deep sense of our place in this web of Creation. Give us the wisdom of mind and generosity of heart to seek your will in the world today. Inspire us to respond to the call to live in solidarity with impoverished countries of the world, so that all children of God might live in dignity and peace. Amen. (Catholic Relief Services).

Care for God's Creation/Reconciliation with Creation



“The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed” (Genesis 2:8).

“Then the LORD God placed man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it.” Genesis 2:15.

God entrusted the first humans the responsibility for caring for creation. The garden was God’s gift to Adam and Eve. In it God provided for all of their needs, and guess what? They represent each one of us! God has given the earth and all that it contains as our Eden. It has all that we need to survive and it is the only home we have. With this in mind let us remember today the great gift of creation. It is one of God’s gift to us – given freely. As you

pray, fast, and give alms, how are you showing God that you are grateful for creation? Are we taking care of it?

Authentic human development and environmental ecology are both inextricably linked. Creation is the work of God and is God's gift to us. Human beings were created in God's image and likeness and given the responsibility to "cultivate and care for" God's Creation (Genesis 2:15). The Church has always urged humankind to care for, preserve, develop and restore the environment. Our responsibility as stewards of God's creation must be placed within the context of the mystery of the Incarnation of God, which, as St Ambrose says "is the salvation of the whole of Creation".

We cannot afford to be indifferent in the face of environmental degradation. "Environmental pollution is making particularly unsustainable the lives of the poor of the world...we must pledge ourselves to take care of creation and to share its resources in solidarity." (Pope Benedict XVI during his Angelus address on Sunday, Aug. 27, 2006).

We are called to address the environmental/ecological crisis which, as he said in 2007, is a moral crisis. The urgency of the situation is expressed in his words: "Our earth speaks to us, and we must listen if we want to survive."

We are one human family and while we seek to address environmental issues that impact on us now, let us remember that we are not to hand over to future generations God's creation depleted of its resources. (cf. Gen 1:4,10,12,18,21,25). (Gen 1,27). Gen 1:31), (cf. Gen 1:26-30). The "common good" includes a concern for those who will come after us. Caring for the environment is an essential element of participating in God's creation. He has given to us everything that we need so that we can live life and live it abundantly.

Being a caretaker for a single property is quite a task; but when that responsibility extends to all of God's creation, that is an awesome responsibility. And yet, that is exactly what God requires of us – not just to be a caretaker but a *steward* of his creation- people, animals, vegetation, water, natural resources and the earth itself. We are to manage, responsibly, all the environmental gifts that our Creator has given to us - not to misuse, abuse and overuse these resources/gifts.

One of the best known passages on 'stewardship' is Jesus' parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27). In it, the master rewards the stewards who managed well the resources he committed to their care, and punished those who did not. Those stewards whom God rewarded as faithful and whose stewardship was expanded were careful, committed and intentional about using the Master's resources for His purposes. God is pleased with disciplined, not careless, stewardship of that which belongs to Him and expects the same of us.

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church tells us that the environment should not be reduced "to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited...A correct understanding of the environment prevents the utilitarian reduction of nature to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited. At the same time, it must not absolutize nature and place it above the dignity of the human person himself..." (n 463).

The AEC Bishops have issued 2 key Pastoral Letters in 2003 and 2005: “Stewardship and the revitalization of parish life in the Caribbean” and “Caring for the Earth – Our responsibility.” The Bishops recognize that “stewardship” is a wider concept than using time, talent and treasure to build up parish communities. They said: “The truth is that all human beings are called to be stewards, stewards of God’s gift of creation, the primary sacrament of His love. To thankfully take responsibility for the integrity of creation is an important part of what it means to be made in God’s image (Genesis 1, especially 26-31). We constantly need to be reminded, and to proclaim to the world: ‘The earth and its fullness belong to the Lord, the world and all that dwell in it.’ (Psalm 24:1) We are all in the world not as owners but as tenants and stewards...God is sovereign of all that exists and has instilled in every creature, including humans, laws and purposes which must be observed.”

Let us become advocates/seek to achieve reconciliation with God’s creation.

"Perhaps reluctantly we come to acknowledge that there are also scars which mark the surface of our earth: erosion, deforestation, the squandering of the world’s mineral and ocean resources in order to fuel an insatiable consumption.” Pope Benedict XVI, World Youth Day 2008

Prayer: Father, our true provider, Today, we thank You for the gift of creation. We thank You for this sign of Your love and affection. Give us the grace we pray, To be true stewards of your creation, So that we, and those who will come after us, will enjoy it. We ask this through Christ the Lord. Amen.



The Role of Government and subsidiarity

“Authority is exercised legitimately only when it seeks the common good of the group concerned and if it employs morally licit means to attain it. If rulers were to enact unjust laws or take measures contrary to the moral order, such arrangements would not be binding in conscience. In such a case, ‘authority breaks down completely and results in shameful abuse.’... Political authority must be exercised within the limits of the moral order and must guarantee the conditions for the exercise of freedom.... It is the role of the state to defend and promote the common good of civil society. ” (CCC, para 1903, 1923, 1927).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says it is the proper role of government to "make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life, including food, clothing, health care, education and culture.

“The state has a positive moral function. It is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good. Its purpose is to assist citizens in fulfilling their responsibility to others in society. Since, in a large and complex society these responsibilities cannot adequately be carried out on a one-to-one basis, citizens need the help of government in fulfilling these responsibilities and promoting the common good. According to the principle of subsidiarity, the functions of government should be performed at the lowest level possible. If they cannot, then a higher level of government should intervene to provide help.” (www.parishesforpeace.org).

Governments should use the resources of the nation/world to promote the common good. Good governance should always be *for the people, by the people and of the people*. Good governance is inextricably linked to human dignity and human rights and promotes authentic human development. People must be at the centre of such development.

Discernment is required by both the individual or group as to what level of involvement is required by the Government and discernment is also required by the State as to how much involvement is truly needed. There are certain characteristics of “good governance” that we should promote. Integrity is at the heart of good governance. Good governance is also accountable, transparent, responsible, responsive to the needs of people, equitable and inclusive, effective and efficient, participatory; it should follow the rule of law (www.goodgovernance.org.au), and promote attitudes, morals and values that foster responsibility, solidarity and tolerance.

Subsidiarity: *Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do.* (Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, (In the 40th Year) 1931, 79).

The principle of subsidiarity helps us as Catholics to determine the scope and limits of governmental intervention. As the US Bishops state in *Economic Justice for All*:

“This principle states that, in order to protect basic justice, government should undertake only those initiatives which exceed the capacities of individuals or private groups acting independently. Government should not replace or destroy smaller communities and individual initiative. Rather it should help them contribute more effectively to social well-being and supplement their activity when the demands of justice exceed their capacities.

“This does not mean, however, that the government that governs least governs best. Rather it defines good government intervention as that which truly ‘helps’ other social groups contribute to the common good by directing, urging, restraining, and regulating economic activity as the occasion requires and necessity demands”.

And in “Faithful Citizenship”, the Bishops state: “The principle of subsidiarity reminds us that larger institutions in society should not overwhelm or interfere with smaller or local institutions, yet larger institutions have essential responsibilities when the more local institutions cannot adequately protect human dignity, meet human needs, and advance the common good.”

Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. As His followers, we are called to be servant leaders in God’s vineyard. Too often, we, and our Leaders, forget what this means for the way they exercise power/authority. The challenge for us is to identify situations of injustice and exploitation around us and to strive to restore God’s original design of equality and right relationships in our homes, communities, country, and the world.

During Lent pray for discernment so that the Lord will fill you with wisdom and enable you to find ways to speak out or stand up against domination/exploitation, and promote the restoration of right relationships.

Prayer: Lord, our God, I bring before you all forms of domination and exploitation that take place in this world. I pray for victims and perpetrators that you may bring them both to healing and reconciliation. I pray that I will not add to the pain of domination or exploitation in my own relationships, and that I may use my power to serve faithfully in Your vineyard. I ask this through Christ, Your Son, who came to serve and not to be served. Amen.

A Prayer for Good Government: Prayer for Government Leaders (based on Psalm 72)

O God,
give Your love of justice to those who rule our land.
Help them to rule with wisdom and compassion,
so that the poor and powerless may be treated fairly and with justice.
Open their ears to the cries for help from those caught
in cycles of poverty, abuse or violence.
Give them wisdom to know how best to respond,
and courage to do the right thing, even when it may not be popular.
Under their rule, may the people flourish;
may there be lasting peace and plenty for all. Amen.

(re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/08/prayer-for-good-government.html)

The Promotion of Peace



*Peace is not the product of terror or fear.
Peace is not the silence of cemeteries.
Peace is not the silent revolt of violent repression.
Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all.
Peace is dynamism. Peace is generosity.*

It is right and it is duty. (Archbishop Oscar Romero – 1917 -1980)

For us as Catholics, PEACE is central to our faith. Pope Emeritus Benedict reminded us that “the foundations of authentic peace rest on the truth about God and man” and that peace is both a gift from God as well as a task. We have to work to promote right relationships. This is at the core of our Archdiocese’s Mission Statement – we are building the Civilisation of Love – reconciliation with God, neighbour, creation and self. Our Church teaches that at the heart of Peace is the recognition of the dignity of the human person and respect for the sanctity of life.

Archbishop Romero said, people have a right to “peace”, but it is also a “duty”. Each of us has a duty to contribute to the process of building peace. This is part of our Catholic Culture and Identity: “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.*” Our vision for our country/world, must be in line with Jesus’ vision. He came to bring life; to bring peace.

Our country and our world yearn for peace. As people of the Beatitudes; as a people of hope, Catholics believe that peace is possible. However, peace will not be achieved if we remain in our comfort zones and fail to take action to build God's Kingdom. Peace-making is an active process. As Pope Paul VI said: "If you want peace, work for justice."

Pope St. John Paul II's encyclical, *On Social Concern*, (Donders translation), #10, reminds us that: "If development is the new name for peace, war and preparations for war are the major enemy of the healthy development of peoples. If we take the common good of all humanity as our norm, instead of individual greed, peace would be possible."

Catholics believe that Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among human beings. As is stated in *The Church in the Modern World*, #78: "Peace is not merely the absence of war. Nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies. Nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called "an enterprise of justice" (Is. 32:7). Peace results from that harmony built into human society by its divine founder, and actualized by men as they thirst after ever greater justice."

And in the encyclical, *On the Development of Peoples*, #76, we read that "Excessive economic, social and cultural inequalities among peoples arouse tensions and conflicts, and are a danger to peace...Peace cannot be limited to a mere absence of war, the result of an ever precarious balance of forces. No, peace is something that is built up day after day, in the pursuit of an order intended by God, which implies a more perfect form of justice among men."

During this Lenten season, let us open our hearts and minds to welcome Jesus, the Prince of Peace more fully into our lives. Jesus came to "*give light to those who live in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.*" (Luke 1:79). Sadly, conflict, war, and crime continue to beset us at every corner. But our Christian hope propels us to build right relationships among all peoples. You and I must play our part during this holy season to become peacemakers, to build pillars of peace.

In his 1963 encyclical, *Peace on Earth*, Pope St. John XXIII stated that there are four pillars of peace: *truth, justice, love and freedom*. In his Message for World Day of Peace in January 2002, Pope St. John Paul II added another 'pillar': 'forgiveness'. He said: 'My reasoned conviction, confirmed in turn by biblical revelation, is that the shattered order cannot be fully restored except by a response that combines justice with forgiveness. The pillars of true peace are justice and that form of love which is forgiveness.' In his Peace Message for 2003, he said that:

“Truth will build peace if every individual sincerely acknowledges not only his/her rights, but also his/her own duties toward others.

Justice will build peace if in practice everyone respects the rights of others and actually fulfils his/her duties toward them.

Love will build peace if people feel the needs of others as their own and share what they have with others, especially the values of mind and spirit that they possess.

Freedom will build peace and make it thrive if, in the choice of the means to that end, people act according to reason and assume responsibility for their own actions...peace lies in the defense and promotion of basic human rights, which every human being enjoys, not as a benefit given by a different social class or conceded by the state, but simply because of our humanity.”

If we are truly a Eucharistic people we will listen to what God is telling us to do and act on it. Remember the words of Psalm 85:

“I am listening. What is Yahweh saying? What God is saying means peace for his people, for his friends, if only they renounce their folly...”

And Psalm (84), is a prayer for peace: *“Mercy and faithfulness have met, justice and peace have embraced...”*

Building peace requires that we promote justice e.g. social justice, distributive justice, commutative justice, and legal justice. Where there are huge gaps between the rich and the poor; where there is a lack of trust, love and mutual respect between ethnic groups, there will be no peace.

Peace and the promotion of peace require daily, constant effort from me, from you. The words to one of my favourite hymns echo this demand: “Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me”. Peace has to begin with me. I cannot expect of another what I won’t and don’t do myself. My words and actions should and must reflect the Christ in me as I respect the Christ in others. Justice is the only way to achieving that peace: loving and caring for others as Christ cares for me.

We end this section by reflecting on the words of Pope Francis who said at the Vigil of Prayer for Peace in Saint Peter’s Square, Saturday September 7, 2013, in our world “there is also ‘violence, division, disagreement, war’. This occurs when man, the summit of creation, stops contemplating beauty and goodness, and withdraws into his own selfishness. When man thinks only of himself, of his own interests and places himself in the centre, when he permits himself to be captivated by the idols of dominion and power, when he puts himself in God’s place, then all relationships are broken and everything is ruined; then the door opens to violence, indifference, and conflict...you are your brother’s keeper! To be human means to care for one another! But when harmony is broken, a metamorphosis occurs: the brother who is to be cared for and loved becomes an adversary to fight, to kill. What violence occurs at that moment, how many conflicts, how many wars have marked our history! ...

“Violence and war are the language of death!... Is it possible to change direction? Can we get out of this spiral of sorrow and death? Can we learn once again to walk and live in the ways of peace? Invoking the help of God, under the maternal gaze of the...Queen of Peace, I say: Yes!...Let everyone be moved to look into the depths of his or her conscience and listen to that word which says: Leave behind the self-interest that hardens your heart, overcome the indifference that makes your heart insensitive towards others, conquer your deadly reasoning, and open yourself to dialogue and reconciliation. Look upon your brother’s sorrow and do not add to it, stay your hand, rebuild the harmony that has been shattered; and all this achieved not by conflict but by encounter!... let us all become, in every place, men and women of reconciliation and peace! Amen.” (www.news.va)

Prayers: “To you, Creator of nature and humanity, of truth and beauty, I pray: Hear my voice, for it is the voice of the victims of all wars and violence among individuals and nations. Hear my voice, for it is the voice of all children who suffer and will suffer when people put their faith in weapons and war. Hear my voice, when I beg you to instill into the hearts of all human beings the wisdom of peace, the strength of justice and the joy of fellowship. Hear my voice, for I speak for the multitudes in every country and every period of history who do not want war and are ready to walk the road of peace. Hear my voice, and grant insight and strength so that we may always respond to hatred with love, to injustice with total dedication to justice, to need with sharing of self, to war with peace. O God, hear my voice, and grant unto the world your everlasting peace” (Pope St. John Paul II).

“This is the peace which we implore of God with the ardent yearning of our prayer. May God banish from our hearts whatever might endanger peace. May God transform us into witnesses of truth, justice and love. May God enlighten the rulers of peoples so that in addition to their solicitude for the proper welfare of their citizens, they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace; may God enkindle the wills of all, so that they may overcome the barriers that divide, cherish the bonds of mutual love, understand others, and pardon those who have done them wrong; by virtue of Christ’s action, may all people of the earth become sisters and brothers, and may the most longed-for peace blossom forth and reign always among us.” (Pacem in Terris (169-171) Pope St. John XXIII, 1961).

Keeping the Garden Watered

“A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches” (Genesis 2:10)

So how do these four rivers (Pishon, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates) affect our lives? That’s a great question! According to several spiritual writers, the watered garden represents our lives. In order for our lives to be watered there must be a source of water and one that divides into four branches. These four branches have been compared to the four relationships that we are called to have, in order to have a beautiful garden: We are to relate well with ourselves, others, God and all of creation. It is when these four rivers are flowing in our lives that we can be assured that our garden is being well watered.

Lent is a great time to focus on ALL of these rivers, not just one or two, but all of them. We are called to care for the “whole person” and “every person”. In this way we can accomplish God’s desire for our lives.

So imagine your rivers. Are any dry? Are they blocked up? Do you feel *life* moving through them? What can you do to get the water flowing again?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You promised that springs of living water would *well up* in those who believe. Today I ask that you renew in me the four rivers of **right relationships**. Help me to love myself, others, creation and most of all, to love **You**. Help me to achieve a balance in my life so that none of the rivers will grow dry, and if they do, help me to get them flowing again. I ask this in Your Holy Name. Amen.

Keep the garden watered by living according to the teachings of our Church.

Catholic Social Teaching - Key Principles

Sanctity of life & the Dignity of the Human Person

Common Good

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

Role of Government & Subsidiarity

Global Solidarity & Development

Social Justice, Communitative Justice, Restorative Justice, Distributive Justice

Dignity of work and the Rights of Workers

Promotion of Peace and Disarmament

Universal Destination of Goods

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