

July 2011



Parish Link



Celebrating Social Action in Parishes

CATHOLICS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by Leela Ramdeen,
Chair, CCSJ

WELCOME to another edition of Parish Link. In this issue we share with you examples of good practice in various parts of our Archdiocese. There is much good work being undertaken in our parishes and CCSJ has created a special page on our website – *Catholics Making a Difference* – to share areas of good practice. We invite you to submit to us via e-mail at rcsocjus@carib-link.net examples of ways in which you or someone/persons you know have made a difference.



We get our mandate from our Scriptures: “The spirit of the lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour.” (Luke 4:18-19).



Each of us can make a difference in our homes, our workplaces, our communities/parishes, in society and in the world at large. The words of the French Dominican, Yves Congar, are apt: “*In the vessel of the Church we are all part of the crew, there is nobody who is a passenger.*” Or, as St John Chrysostom said: “*The Christian is a man/woman to whom God has entrusted all men/women.*”

Clearly, therefore, we cannot afford to be “armchair” Catholics. As His Grace, Archbishop Edward J. Gilbert, C.Ss.R, always reminds us, developing a personal relationship with God requires us to have a horizontal relationship with our neighbour and not a vertical one with God alone. We must see God in the faces of our neighbours and respond to their needs. Where necessary, we must be advocates to promote integral human development. We do not journey alone. We are on pilgrimage with each other.



(continued from p.1) **Catholics Making A Difference**

The sanctity of life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of the Church's social justice principles. Para 1931 of our Catechism reminds us that: "Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that 'everyone should look upon his/her neighbour (without any exception) as 'another self', above all bearing in mind his/her life and the means necessary for living it with dignity.'"



Too many of our people lack basic amenities. We are called to stand in solidarity with others in need. You can make a difference by embracing CCSJ's vision of 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 and equity; promotes the common good, respect for human life and ecology justice."

Now is the time for us Catholics to "wake up" and let our voices and action be "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" (part of CCSJ's Mission). Let us rekindle the fire of our faith within us; pray and ask the Holy Spirit to work in and through us to BUILD THE CIVILIZATION OF LOVE. Let's act to make a difference. I leave you with some quotations for reflection:



"You are the salt of the earth, But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again?...You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men and women, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:13-16).



"My children, our love is not to be just words or mere talk, but something real and active; only by this can we be certain that we are children of the truth and be able to quieten our conscience in his presence. (1 John 3:18-19)

"Move forward" in faith "with firm resolve... Follow faithfully in the footsteps of those who have gone before you... overcome every separation between faith and life...reject a false dichotomy between faith and political life and ... work to enrich... society and culture".
(Pope Benedict XVI, April 2008, New York).



Let's help lift each other to a higher, "more noble place".
(Martin Luther King J.R.)

Holy Cross Church Princes Town Parish



Clients socializing before meals



Saying "The grace" meaningfully



Louisa Garcia (cook) & Cynthia Hoyte



Not for soup only

Social Action - The Right to sustainable meals

Project: SOUP KITCHEN

Joan Lee Chong, Secretary, Friends of Holy Cross

Located on the compound of Holy Cross Catholic Church, Princes Town, the Soup Kitchen, operated by Friends of Holy Cross, caters to the needs of the marginalized in the area and has evolved into an oasis of love, caring and friendship for all who pass through its doors.

On Sunday 7th November 1999, Friends of Holy Cross opened the Soup Kitchen, serving a nutritious meal to just eleven persons. This number increased over the years, peaking at around 100 in 2004/2005. When sufficient funding was available, meals were served three days each week. At the present time, approximately eighty five persons are served only on Wednesdays. Food stuff, clothing and household items are collected and distributed. Counselling, recommendations, friendship, visits to the sick and even funeral arrangements are all part of the services offered. Every year a Christmas Treat is hosted for the clients of the Soup Kitchen and for children of the area, with toys for the children and gifts for the adults.

The Soup Kitchen is funded through the untiring fundraising efforts of members of Friends of Holy Cross and the generosity of interested persons. All contributions are greatly appreciated. The high cost of food presents a serious challenge to the life of the kitchen, which is under the patronage of the Prophet, St. Elijah. The constant prayer is that "Jar of meal shall not be spent, jug of oil shall not be emptied".

A live wire in the kitchen is Mrs. Louisa Garcia, the cook, who works tirelessly, gives selflessly, and whose "sweet hand" produces the tasty meals.

The impact of this kitchen on the lives of its clients is quite remarkable. Many of them would arrive early to lime, so friendships are formed. They are generally not in any hurry to leave and some may stay and chat for hours with one another and with members of Friends of Holy Cross. When they first come to the kitchen many are introverted. They may be very quiet, diffident, and would only talk privately with members of Friends of Holy Cross or with others whom they may have known previously. In a few months their demeanour begin to change. The surety of a meal on Wednesdays is a stress-reducer for many. New clothes bring a self - assurance that can be clearly seen in the lift of the head, a smile on the face or in the confident stride as they go about their business.

Sts. Patrick, Joachim, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel - Cedros Parish

**Social Justice— Advocacy, Solidarity, Education & Community Organizing.
Protecting the Environment, The Chatham ALCOA Struggle. Preserving Ourselves.**

By Dexter Charles Mitchell

Cedros RC In Solidarity With Anti-smelter Struggle.



Every hand counts

On Christmas Eve, December 24th 2006, the residents of Chatham breathed a sigh of relief as then Prime Minister, Hon. Patrick Manning, announced to the nation that the Government had decided to discontinue plans to build an Alcoa Aluminum Smelter in the Chatham/Cap-de-ville Estate.

It was a victory won after two years of protests and struggle as this very small community took on the Government and a multinational giant, Alcoa. This struggle was a cry for justice. Many referred to it as “David vs Goliath”. Were politicians prepared to listen to the views of those whom they serve? From Day One in 2004 at the first sensitization meeting (which I chaired) between Alcoa and local residents at Chatham Government Primary School, there were strong objections from members of the Chatham Community. Emotions also ran high at the second meeting at Cap-de-ville Community Centre as residents cited serious health and environmental risks.



Young Chatham protesters were not left out.

The community came together as never before under the Chatham/Cap-de-ville Environmental Protection Group. Fitzroy Beache led the struggle, together with elder, Yvonne Ashby, and scores of villagers. However, Chatham could not do it alone. Soon enough prominent members of Civil Society organizations joined the struggle. Ancil Roget, Dr. Wayne Kubralsingh, Professor Peter Vine, Attorney Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, Inshan Ishmael, David Abdullah, Anil Roberts and several environmentalists from all over the country joined in the struggle. Cedros Peninsular United, Rights Action Group, the Catholic Commission for Social Justice, Parish Priest Fr. Wilfred John, other religious leaders from the Hindu, Muslim, Presbyterian and Pentecostal faiths united in speaking against the smelter plant.

At stake was the Erin Aquifer. Water or Smelter, Life or Death, became the battle cry. Soil tests confirmed the presence of too much water. Chatham was not about to destroy this Aquifer. This US 1.5 billion aluminum smelter project which was scheduled to produce 341,000 metric tons per year would have:

- ◆ **hurt villages along the peninsular**
- ◆ **displaced 110 families**
- ◆ **released harmful emissions (Electromagnetic Fields-EMF) in the environment**
- ◆ **posed occupational hazards**
- ◆ **diminished bio-diversity**
- ◆ **led to the desecration of Beau Congo, a former slave settlement.**

Apart from environmental issues, questions were raised as to whether this type of development was sustainable. Is this the best use of our natural gas? Would such a project promote integral human development?



Global warming is more than just a hot topic.

Villagers and environmentalists were willing to risk their lives to stop this madness. Marches, Prayer Vigils and distribution of literature found on the internet were the order of the day.

Many kept the faith, including the late Fr. Michael Moses who urged protesters not to give up. "Faith in God and people-power must be at the heart of social justice," he stressed. Fr. Moses spoke of the faith of a Pentecostal pastor whom he encountered while visiting the village. "Father," he said, "for sure this Pentecostal Lighthouse eh moving". Faith enabled this small community, and those who stood in solidarity with them, to stand up against the government and a mighty multinational corporation. The masses were preserving themselves and their environment for future generations.



Stop automobile pollution



Control off-shore pollution



Support clean energy

Assumption & St. Thomas More - South Oropouche Parish

Social Justice Projects - Feeding the needy, Protecting Animals, Solidarity with Accident victims.



Mr. Cazeau collects meal for delivery



Urban Sylvan - Coordinator

Meals on Wheels: On Sundays, when you sit at your lunch table to relax and enjoy a sumptuous Trini Sunday meal, after a long week of labour, spare a thought and a prayer for those less fortunate. This has been the motivating factor for the Meals on Wheels team at the Fyzabad St. Tho-

mas More Church in the South Oropouche parish. Messrs Cazeau, Stewart (deceased), Navarro, Herrera, Marchan and Sylvan have unceasingly been collecting and distributing hot meals to 16 underprivileged families Sunday after Sunday for four continuous years. The meals are prepared at parishioners homes. These indefatigable volunteers smile in the midst of the midday heat as they collect then distribute their meals with a joy in their heart [reminding us that the Lord loves a joyful giver]. They all note how remarkable it is that there is always enough. All praise and glory to God.

Protecting Animals: Last September, as part of their *Respect For Life Week* observation, members of the South Oropouche RC Cub Scouts under their leader, Kevin Boodhoo (teacher/lay minister), gathered at the *Animals Alive* animal shelter in the district, to donate their time and talent. The shelter houses hundreds of animals (strays) that have been abandoned in the southland. Together with students from Holy Faith Convent, Penal, and generous donations of paint and supplies from parishioners, the young volunteers diligently went about the task of repainting the interior of the shelter. The volunteers themselves developed a renewed respect for another of God's wonderful creation, animals.



HFC students at work



RC cub scouts getting down



youth admiring shelter animals



Celebration time - Its all over



T: Walking the Creek

B: Balloons for victims

Solidarity with Accident Victims: Parishioners supported the call of the *Arrive Alive* group {via the CCSJ Nov. 2010 communiqué) and marched through pouring rain along Mosquito Creek, demonstrating solidarity with those who lost their lives or were seriously injured through reckless driving. Mosquito Creek borders our parish and is infamous for deadly accidents due to speeding and drunk driving. Prayers by different denominations were said before the walk. Safe driving leaflets were handed out. The march concluded with moving speeches by accident survivors and victims families.



T: March begins

B: Prayers before walk



Arrive Alive promised to keep up the pressure for new legislation on safer road usage.

Sacred Heart - La Brea Parish

Social Action - Bringing Dignity to Senior Citizens by Susannah Edwards



The sixteen children of the Sacred Heart Sunday School and their four teachers ventured out on a Christmas project to bring joy to the hearts of 'shut-ins' in the community. This was a new venture in the parish and was conceived by our duly designated lady of the cloth, Sr. Paul Clarke, and Fr. Shijo.

The uniform consisted of pale yellow jerseys with silver tinsels completed with Santa Claus hats and white pompoms. Braving the weather with excitement, singing carols and carrying good cheer, we were the subjects of Good King Wenceslaus as we walked through muddy tracks to arrive in beautiful living rooms and quiet bedrooms with bed-ridden residents.



But joy flowed. The children prayed, hugged and presented gifts. The tears of joy and words of thankfulness from beaming adults who never thought they would ever be visited, was adequate payment for the task. Sometimes, due to heavy rainfall, we had to remain in the van and sing our hearts out. We felt that the notes were somehow penetrating the windows of the listeners. When we entered some homes we were waited upon and given delicious refreshments, popular in the season.

Many joined us, young and the old. They followed the van and wherever we stopped crowds gathered. The people were fired-up, the children shone, glee overflowed in the name of the Lord. All in all, thirty two homes were visited. We could have virtually touched the love that poured out on our gracious community. At the end of the campaign, the children were taken to a mall to celebrate and have a day of fun. This project would be repeated every year at Christmas time, and plans are a-foot to develop this project with increased participation, more visits and additional activities to enhance the lives of our 'shut-in' brothers and sisters.

St Theresa's RC Church - Rio Claro Parish

Social Justice: The Right to Decent Housing

Project : House for Cathy Rodriguez



Cathy inspects house under construction

Project Co-ordinator: Bellamarie Singh

Cathy Rodriguez is a 43 year old single mother and an active member of the parish of Rio Claro. She damaged her back at her workplace and became housebound. As she is now unable to walk, we decided to help her to improve her living conditions. The first phase was to acquire a piece of land, which was generously donated by Kurt Rodriguez, her brother. The parish took on the project as our Lenten act of almsgiving. We saw it as a faith project as we started without a dollar to our name. The roof will be completed shortly.

Cathy's house is a 30 x 24 concrete structure. We are nearly there - thanks to the generosity and financial contributions of many, including her brother and Andy Weste, a special friend.



Help for challenged parishioner

Santa Rita helps sick parishioners

The parishioners of Santa Rita reached out to help four of their parishioners who had health problems- – 2 needed dialysis. Parishioners held a barbecue and raised \$12,000 dollars to share between the 4 parishioners in need. As Catholics, it is important that we stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need. We also recognize the need to advocate for a health care system that will meet the needs of all citizens.



Sr. Annette Chow hugs a grateful parishioner

St Charles Parish – Tunapuna



Social Action - Promoting Healthy Living - The Fight Against Cancer

Last year, the Social Justice Team of St Charles Parish introduced the idea of the **Cancer Mobile Unit** to the parish. Announcements were made and flyers distributed. The Cancer Society also made announcements in the area.

On May 3rd, 2010 there were so many people that the mobile unit could have facilitated only twenty five persons on that day. Thus names were taken and new appointments had to be made to accommodate everyone.

A second visit was made on June 4th. The numbers were so overwhelming that the teachers of the two Catholic Schools in the area were not facilitated.

On their third visit on June 15th the Mobile Unit had yet another full day's work..

Over 80 women have been screened during the three visits. Pap smears, physical breast examinations and urine tests were done - all for the minimal cost of twenty-five dollars, right on our door step.

The Mobile Unit visited again on June 2nd, 2011 and we are now in the process of organizing appointments for the teachers of the schools that were not previously accommodated.

Cancer Information



Cancer cell

[Abstracted from Minister of Health address at Breast Cancer Musical Festival launch, Hilton Hotel, June 15 2010]

The World Health Organization argues that 30 per cent of cancers are preventable. One in three cancer cases is due to poor lifestyle choices. Being overweight, physically inactive or obese are responsible for 274,000 cancer deaths per year internationally.

“ As you may already know, **cancer is the third leading cause of death in Trinidad and Tobago**. All initiatives aimed at promoting awareness, prevention, early detection and survival of cancer patients in the population go a long way to curbing the detrimental effects of cancer on our society. Cancer is indeed a powerful adversary – it is the leading cause of death worldwide. It accounted for 7.4 million or 13% of all deaths in 2004 and deaths from cancer worldwide are projected to continue to increase, with an estimated 12 million deaths in 2030. It is also important to remember that while it is 100 times more likely for women to get breast cancer, **men also have breast tissue that can develop cancer**. Ladies and gentlemen, the **Trinidad and Tobago Cancer Registry indicated that there were 18,136 cases of cancer from 1995 to 2004 and approximately sixty per cent were fatal cases**. Of all the cancers, breast cancer ranks second in leading causes of death by cancer. In addition, incidences of cancer increase at an annual rate of 11%. Approximately **one third of the cancer burden could be decreased** if detection and treatment occur early... The WHO has recommended the early detection strategies of awareness of early signs and symptoms, screening by clinical breast examination in demonstration areas, and mammography screening. Early detection is the cornerstone of breast cancer control and is extremely important in improving the survival rate of breast cancer patients...The onus is on us to spread the message of disease prevention and healthy lifestyle choices to the population at large”.

Santa Rosa - Arima

SOUP KITCHEN



It was the only Covenant Day ever held in the parish of Santa Rosa – that Sunday of July 2004 – and today the parish continues to see the results in the fortnightly Soup Kitchen that has since evolved.

That first meal of fifty lunches was brought to the parish office to receive the blessing of Msgr. Pereira, who was also the recipient of the very first lunch. From a serving base at the corner of St. Joseph and Sorzano Sts., (Dr. Joyce's corner), the lunches were then distrib-

uted to the homeless and needy on the streets of Arima. Many of the parish youths provided invaluable assistance at this time.

The Soup Kitchen reached out to people in the districts of Jonestown, Maturita, Samaroo Ville, Pinto, and Temple Street to name a few. This service, though Catholic based, was not only for Catholics. The criteria

was the 'neediness' of the individual or of the family. It was not meant to foster dependency, but rather to meet temporary needs.

The best is always given as God's portion. The food is purchased at the market on the Saturday morning. It is then cooked under the capable leadership of Mary Marcano. What once began in the ladies' homes had to be moved to the kitchen of "Our Lady, Home of Reconciliation" on Providence Circular. Cooking is presently done at Mary's home at Demerara Rd, Arima.



This venture was totally dependent on the generosity of

its benefactors. A core team of seven pledged to meet the expenses of the \$3000.00 needed to run the kitchen's two ventures per month.

Volunteers often use their own cars and at times cars have had to be rented. Tithing is a must for the team, so God's portion is always separated and given wherever the Spirit moves. The Arima Lions Club has recently donated a deep freeze and it has expressed an interest in donating some large pots.

Santa Rosa

SOUP KITCHEN



Prayer

Prayer continues to be the backbone of this ministry. Every first Friday the team participates in the all-night vigil in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in POS. From there it's straight to 7.00 a.m. Mass at the Holy Cross Chapel in Arima, followed by Rosary meditation. Every last Friday of the month there is an all-night vigil in the adoration room of the Santa Rosa Church.

VISION

It is the vision of the team that other soup kitchens would be started in parishes in Trinidad and Tobago. The motto of this soup kitchen is the Beatitude: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,"* **Matt. 5: 3**. But there are seven other beatitudes which they would like to see come alive in other parishes in T&T, thus forming a network of soup kitchens, all aimed at the empowerment of the individual or family so that they can rise out of their circumstances. It is felt that if the soup kitchen is to have a home within a parish it should be more than just a place for a meal; it should also be a centre where professional help, counselling and skills training – all aimed at the eventual empowerment of the individual – would be provided. Nevertheless this soup kitchen continues to grow as some young ladies of St Joseph's Convent, POS, have expressed an interest in helping in the soup kitchen. They will join us as soon as they have completed their present exams.

Everis De Freitas, a core member who joined the team in 2007, stressed the need for commitment and discipline for such a venture to work. Proper preparation and organization are essential at all times. Even though the challenges may seem overwhelming at times, the Lord is there to help and guide as needed, once they turn to Him. Their approach continues to be professional as they now have a work uniform and a dress uniform—in keeping with the high standards that have to be maintained in God's service.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

The actions of this group of women certainly meet some of the tenets of the Church's social teaching that stress:

The life and dignity of the human person

The call to family, community, and participation

The option for the poor and vulnerable.



Visit Santa Rosa www.santarosatt.org

† CCSJ's Ask Why TV Programme DVDs 2011 †

25 January: Religious Freedom - The Path to Peace

Panellists: Fr Joe Harris, Deacon Mike James, Br. Noble Khan (Muslim),
Pundit Bramdeo Maharaj (Hindu). Moderator: Leela Ramdeen

22 February: Promoting Social Justice through culture

Panellists: Mr. Hollis Liverpool a.k.a Chalkdust, and Mr. Felix Edinborough,
The Pierrot Grenade. Moderator: Leela Ramdeen

22 March: Pope Benedict XVI's Lenten Message 2011

Panellists: Fr Clyde Harvey, Mrs. Thora Best and Ms. Nadine Bushell.
Moderator: Leela Ramdeen

19 April: Journeying to Easter.

Panellists: Msgr Jason Gordon, Vicar for Administration and Mr. Gerard Pemberton, retired
Director of the Development Finance Ltd. Moderator: Leela Ramdeen

24 May: Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

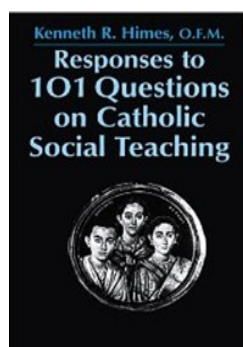
Panellist: Mr. Felipe Noguera. Moderator: Sr Theresa Vialva

28 June : Catholics making a difference.

Panellists: Fr Clyde Harvey and Andrea Joseph-Hutchinson. Moderator: Leela Ramdeen

Social Justice Resources

Now Available!

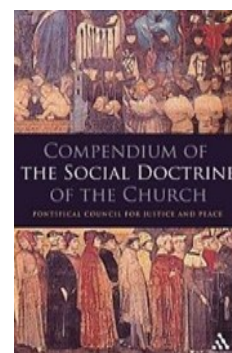


Ask Why DVD Series 2010

Take a Bite DVD Series 2010

◆ **Responses to 101 Questions on Catholic Social Teaching (Kenneth R Himes) \$80.00**

◆ **Compendium of The Social Doctrine of The Church (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace) \$140.00**



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Want help to support or start Social Justice programmes? Call/E-mail today...

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