



Parish Link

Celebrating Respect for life Week 2010
24th Sept- 3rd Oct 2010



"Greetings! CCSJ is pleased to welcome you to another edition of **Parish Link** which is being produced in time for celebrations to observe *Respect For Life Week (RFLW)* (24 Sept – 3 Oct, 2010). CCSJ thanks members of the Planning Committee who have worked diligently to plan activities for RFLW – including persons from various faith communities and the Inter-Religious Organisation. Thanks also to those who have contributed to this edition of our Newsletter. It is important that we locate RFLW within the context of Synod.

Synod Resolution 3 under the Archdiocese's 3rd Pastoral Priority: Regenerating the Moral and Spiritual Values of our Society states:

Resolution #3a: Be it resolved that each parish and school become a community celebrating the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, affirming and developing the whole person.

Res. 3a:1: "The Archdiocese to dedicate a week every year to the theme of 'respect for life.'"

Res. 3a:3: "Each parish to conscientiously, honestly assess how it respects life, in terms of facilities for and services to persons from all walks of life and implement systems accordingly."

Our Archdiocesan Mission Statement calls us to build "the civilization of love" – love of God, neighbour, self and creation. Mission is where people are – in our homes, parishes, workplaces, and communities.

We urge parishes, schools, organizations, families and individuals to observe RFLW. As a Eucharistic people, we have a duty to address the many threats to human life/human dignity in our society and in our world today e.g. crime and violence, unjust wars, abortion, the death penalty, euthanasia, torture, subhuman living conditions, incest, domestic violence, pornography, arbitrary

imprisonment, slavery, prostitution, human trafficking, disgraceful working conditions, child labour, forced labour and forced migration, religious intolerance, racism, sexism, class bias, and discrimination against persons with disability. (See *Gaudium et Spes*, #27).

While there are many threats to life in TT/the world, we must grasp opportunities "to respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life." (Pope John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, no. 5). Our AEC Bishops remind us in their 2008 Pastoral Letter, *The Gift of Life*, that: "The Church is to announce with great vigour, by word and deed, that human life is sacred and inviolable. This proclamation demands the promotion and the renewal of a culture of life. All Catholics, including bishops, priests, religious, laity, theologians, catechists, parents and teachers have a role to play in promoting a culture of life." Building a culture of life also involves promoting environmental/ecological justice. As Pope John Paul II said (24 July, 2007) "Our earth speaks to us, and we must listen if we want to survive". The Holy Spirit is calling all of us to be counter-cultural; to swim against the tide of the culture of death that threatens us; to demonstrate that we are a people of life and for life - in all circumstances and at all stages. **What are you and your parish doing to observe RFLW?"**



Leela Ramdeen
Chair, CCSJ



Anna Ackbarali and
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Coordinators

RESPECT LIFE – JUSTICE FOR THE SOCIALLY EXCLUDED



Poverty and Hunger in T&T amidst petro wealth

[by Gary Tagallie, Chair of the Parish Social Justice Group, Chaguanas, works as Director, Poverty Reduction Programme in the Ministry of the People and Social Development]

When the resources of the earth are captured by a few to the detriment of the majority it inherently creates an unjust situation. In 2006 the World Institute for Development Economics Research found that the richest 1% of adults in the world own 40% of the planet's wealth. Half the world's adult population, however, owned barely 1% of global wealth. In Trinidad and Tobago (2005), 16.7% or 215,000 of our population lived below a poverty line of \$665 per adult person per month.

One of the effects of poverty is social exclusion “a lack of belonging, acceptance and recognition...[alienation](#) or [disenfranchisement](#) of certain people”. Wikipedia).

As Catholics, followers of Jesus, we must “...create conditions for marginalized voices to be heard, to defend the defenceless, and to assess lifestyles, policies and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor.” (Centre for Social Concerns).

The most effective way of addressing poverty and social exclusion has to be at the parish level.

1) We must change our attitude to the poor, vulnerable and socially excluded. This is difficult since we operate in a culture and mindset of exclusion in how we manage our parishes, parish groups, even our liturgies. Like Jesus we must situate ourselves among those who are poor, marginalized and vulnerable. This requires a spirit and attitude of inclusiveness and respect - a full restoration of human dignity.

2) Parishes must become places where the unemployed, the underemployed, the unskilled, illiterate can regain and have the dignity of decent work. Our pastoral plans must include strategies to address the poverty, unemployment and social exclusion in all its manifestations. We must seek to encourage (and/or oblige) employers to be more inclusive and just in their employment policies and practices.

3) The parish must be the source of innovation and creativity in addressing the social scourges afflicting our communities by using our social entrepreneurs – these are people ‘with innovative solutions to society’s most pressing social problems infused with values based on the Gospel of Jesus.

4) The parish can nurture the development of social businesses. These Companies [Social Businesses] “must cover all costs and make profit, at the same time achieve the social objectives – healthcare, housing, financial services for the poor, nutrition, safe drinking water...renewable energy, etc. (Yunus centre)

As Catholics we are called to envision a society which resembles the Eden as created by God – a world in harmony – human beings in harmony with one another, the human person in harmony with his/her environment, the human person in harmony with his/her creator.

Once we follow God’s plan there should be no social exclusion The world is no longer the Eden created by God, our work as Catholics is to restore that Eden.

RESPECT LIFE- RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT



Polluting The Nariva



For the next generation?



Natural beauty of T&T-cedros

It's Our Responsibility [by Nigel Cassimire, St. Theresa's, Woodbrook]

Home is a special place for us humans. It is the place where we relax, unwind, share good times, raise our families and just be ourselves. We do our best to keep it clean, comfortable and welcoming. Can we see **our world** in that light: the planet as our only home and God as the ultimate philanthropist who has gifted us with his awesome creation?

The Book of Genesis tells us that God created the world and saw that it was good. God created humankind in His own image (it was very good) and placed them as stewards of His creation. But with great power (dominion) comes great responsibility. This means that while our technological advances might be intrinsically positive, the nature, end and means of our applied technology [must be] subject to “moral principles and values which respect and realize in its fullness the dignity of man”. This principle also extends to respect for other living things and the promotion of harmony with creation generally, as this is what sustains us in this phase of existence.

The Church also cautions that we do not understand, let alone control, the impact of our actions in one sphere on other interconnected aspects of our ecosystem and on future generations. Our environment is a home and a resource for ALL...truly a collective good. “Being stewards, faithfulness will be demanded of us.” [1 Cor. 4:2]. So there are theological and common-sense motives to our approach and our responsibility for our environment. Each and every one of us is called to build greater awareness, assess one's own habits and adopt more environmentally friendly practices at a personal, family and community level.

So what really can I do? Start by considering what aspect(s) of environmental issues are of most concern. Is it the macro problem of global warming? Then figure out how you might reduce your carbon footprint at home and at work i.e. the measure of how your activities contribute to “greenhouse” gases. The Institute of Marine Affairs recommends the following among other things:

- turn off lights and electronic equipment when not in use, unplug charged cell phones
- replace regular incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs
- use less hot water
- conserve paper at work

What about sanitation, waste management and flooding problems? Provide/advocate for adequate community sanitation services, encourage activities/competitions to build pride, live the mantra of reduce, reuse & recycle. Neighbourhoods could organize their own collection points, Social Justice parish groups could lead in projects like these in this year “Catholic family, become what you are.”

Each of us (individually) recognizing and living our role as an environmental steward will influence those around us positively. Involve our children too so that the attitudes and practices would be sustainable and enduring. I'll do my two cents. What about you?

RESPECT LIFE – RESPECT THE DIFFERENTLY ABLED



Differently Abled students in training at a local institution

Advocating to Eliminate Social Exclusion

[by Beverly Beckles CEO National Centre for Persons with disabilities]

“ A Society which is good for disabled people is a better society for all”. Dr. Lisa Kauppinen, President of the World Federation of the Deaf at the closing of the Copenhagen Summit.

Defining disability is not an easy task, in the past two decades, as the disability rights movement has emerged, the concept of disability has shifted from individual impairment to a more social phenomenon. In this social view, people with disabilities are seen as being restricted in performing daily activities because of a complex set of interrelating factors, some pertaining to the person and some pertaining to the person's immediate environment and social/political arrangements.

The social concept of disability introduces the notion that society has erected barriers, physical or attitudinal that affect people with disabilities. In 2001 the World Health Organization released a new framework, the International Classification of functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) looking at the body, individual activities, social participation and social environments. If we are to be guided by the UN estimates, in Trinidad and Tobago, the number of persons with disabilities would be in the region of 130,000 persons.

It is internationally recognized that persons with disabilities are disproportionately amongst the poorest of the poor in all parts of the world, but it is more than just monetary and involves the condition of "voicelessness" which has great consequences for discrimination, powerlessness and exclusion.

In the main, disability has social, health and human rights implications. Disability is not a natural, but a social fact. It has a powerful human rights dimension and is often associated with social exclusion and increased exposure and vulnerability to poverty. The states of "voicelessness" and "powerlessness" are major deterrents in persons with disabilities' ability to advocate for social inclusion. They are least represented in research, and results are not always available.

The “voicelessness” and powerlessness of persons with disabilities must not continue. They must have a voice and, of course, interlocutors open to dialogue to construct inclusive alliances. There are huge costs to society if it fails to consider and include persons with disabilities. Developing countries, such as in the Caribbean, must strive to ensure that they accept their responsibilities of the policy agenda particularly the empowerment of the poor of which persons with disabilities form a part.

We must strive for a "Society for All" where policy will state clearly the goal of an inclusive society for all; a society that tolerates and celebrates diversity and promotes equity and social justice; a society within which persons with disabilities have a key role to play.

Respect Life

Have Respect for Animals

Animals Alive Sanctuary

"All the animals in the forest are Mine and the cattle on thousands of hills. All the wild birds are Mine and all living things in the fields."

Psalm 50:10, 11

Animals Alive is an animal charity that saves the lives of abandoned and abused animals through rehabilitation, socialization and training so that they can be given a second chance. We aim to have these animals adopted into safe, loving homes and allow the unadoptable ones to live their lives out in dignity at the sanctuary. We have successfully intervened and saved hundreds of companion animals over the last two years and will continue to raise the bar for the humane treatment of animals. We advocate a pet education drive so pet owners can learn to treat their animals well. We are campaigners for the updating and enforcement of laws against cruelty to animals. We staunchly believe that animals should not be put down just because they are homeless. We uphold the respect for life mantra in our vision and mission.



Prayer of Saint Francis for Animals

God Our Heavenly Father, You created the world to serve humanity's needs and to lead them to You. By our own fault we have lost the beautiful relationship which we once had with all your creation.

Help us to see that by restoring our relationship with You we will also restore it with all Your creation.

Give us the grace to see all animals as gifts from You and to treat them with respect for they are Your creation.

***Visit The Sanctuary, Ralph Narine Tr.
South Oropouche between the hours of
8:00am and 3: 30pm***

Tel 709-1151

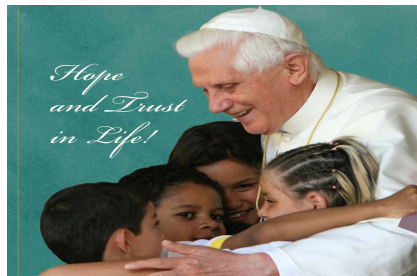
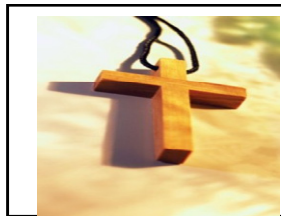
www.animalsalivett.com

Download full RFL articles at <http://rcsocialjusticett.org/2.0/link-up/>

† QUOTATIONS FOR REFLECTION ON LIFE ISSUES †

1. “The Church...is called to proclaim the gift of life, to serve life, and to promote a culture of life...This is the message of hope we are called to proclaim and embody in a world where self-centeredness, greed, violence, and cynicism so often seem to choke the fragile growth of grace in people’s hearts.” Pope Benedict XVI (19 April, 2008).

2. “Initiatives aimed at protecting the essential and primary values of life from its conception, and of the family based on indissoluble marriage between a man and a woman, help to respond to some of today's most insidious and dangerous threats to the common good. Such initiatives represent, along with many other forms of commitment, essential elements in the building of the civilization of love”. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity is Principal Strength and Guide of the Church*, Fatima, Portugal, May 13, 2010)



3. “As Christians we are to be ‘people of and for life;’ we are to be genuinely pro-life, with a proper understanding of what this means.”
AEC Bishops of the Caribbean, *The Gift of Life*. (2008)

4. “To be actively pro-life is to contribute to the renewal of society through the promotion of the common good. (However) it is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life from conception to natural death...it is not enough to remove unjust laws. The underlying causes of attacks on life have to be.” Pope John Paul II: *The Gospel of Life* (1995).



5. "Precisely in an age when the inviolable rights of the person are solemnly proclaimed and the value of life is publicly affirmed, the very right to life is being denied or trampled upon, especially at the more significant moments of existence: the moment of birth and the moment of death."
Pope John Paul II: *The Gospel of Life* (1995)

6. "Connected with our prayer must be the thoughtful and faithful reflection upon the Church's teaching on the respect for all human life and the integrity of the family and of God's creation. In our homes, in our Catholic schools and universities, in parish study groups, and in everyday conversations and discussions with our neighbours, we are called to give an uncompromising witness to the Gospel of Life. Parents, parish priests and institutions of Catholic education must be aware of the constant anti-life and anti-family messages which constantly bombard us and our young people."

(Archbishop Raymond Burke, Keynote Address at the National Prayer Breakfast, May 8, 2009)



7. "... euthanasia and assisted suicide are never acceptable acts of mercy. They always gravely exploit the suffering and desperate, extinguishing life in the name of the 'quality of life' itself." (Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics-National Conference of Catholic Bishops (United States) -1998.

8. "The distinctive mark of the Christian, today more than ever, must be love for the poor, the weak, the suffering." Pope John Paul II.

9. "I cannot fail to note once again that the poor constitute the modern challenge, especially for the well-off of our planet, where millions of people live in inhuman conditions and many are literally dying of hunger. It is not possible to announce God the Father to these brothers and sisters without taking on the responsibility of building a more just society in the name of Christ." Pope John Paul II: The Gospel of Life (1995)



10. "a just wage is the concrete means of verifying the justice of the economic system... It is not the only means of checking, but it is a particularly important one and in a sense the key means... Wages must enable the worker and his family to have access to a truly human standard of living in the material, social, cultural and spiritual orders. It is the dignity of the person which constitutes the criterion for judging work, not the other way around." Pope John Paul II: The Gospel of Life (1995)

11. The world that God created has been entrusted to us. Our use of it must be directed by God's plan for creation, not simply for our own benefit. Our stewardship of the Earth is a form of participation in God's act of creating and sustaining the world. In our use of creation, we must be guided by a concern for generations to come. We show our respect for the Creator by our care for creation. —US Bishops, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*

† PRAYER FOR RESPECT FOR LIFE WEEK †

Creator of all we thank you for the gift of life.

We pray for a deeper respect and appreciation for life and all that sustains life.

Instill in us a sense of wonder and awe for all creation, especially for human life.

You created us for unity and to live in unity with all of creation.

We ask forgiveness for the times we have selfishly exploited the land and

other life forms for our own desires;

for our failure to love our brothers and sisters whom we are called to love

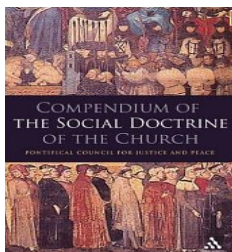
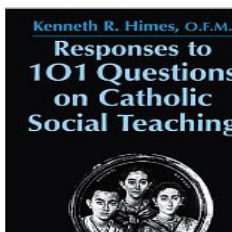
- regardless of their ethnic background, social status or religious belief.

We pray that we may be a source of unity and

life as we journey through life. Amen.

Social Justice Resources Now Available!

(Contact Lorna or Marge @ 290-1635)



- **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**

- ✓ **Calendar 2010**
Values and Virtues Seminar Eastern Vicariate – St Francis of Assisi, S/Grande, 23 October
(Presenter - Msgr. Robert Llanos)
- ✓ **Respect for Life Week: 24 Sept - 3 Oct. 2010**
- ✓ **See RFL Schedule at rcsocialjusticett.org/2.0/events**

Please send all Parish submissions to
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