

**And see Chair's report etc below**

## **THE CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (CCSJ)**

### **Draft Pastoral Plan for 2013 by Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ**

#### **SYNOD RESOLUTIONS:**

Following Synod 2009, CCSJ was charged with responsibility for taking a lead to implement Pastoral Priority 3 (PP): REGENERATING THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL VALUES OF OUR SOCIETY. The Goal of this PP and the 7 Resolutions relating to this Goal are as follows. It is to be noted that not all resolutions fall within the remit of CCSJ:

**GOAL:** That each Catholic, as a committed disciple of Christ, knows, lives and witnesses to the rich moral teaching of the Church and actively partners with people of goodwill towards the moral and spiritual renewal of Trinidad and Tobago.

**RESOLUTION #1a:** Be it resolved that the Archdiocese develop a comprehensive strategy to educate the People of God in values and virtuous living, based on the rich tradition of magisterial teaching and theological heritage of the Catholic moral tradition.

**RESOLUTION #1b:** Lead Department: Catechetical Team: Be it resolved that the Catholic parishes and schools, as well as the Archdiocesan Departments, be responsible for the implementation of the comprehensive strategy of #1a.

**RESOLUTION #2:** Lead Department – Family Life Commission: Be it resolved that the Archdiocese develop a comprehensive strategy for the formation of families as the domestic Church – the first moral community, for the moral and spiritual renewal of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**RESOLUTION #3b:** Be it resolved that the Archdiocese develop a comprehensive programme as it relates to pro-life (including the topical issues of abortion and contraception) given our belief in, and our celebration of, the sanctity of life.

**RESOLUTION #4:** Be it resolved that Catholic families, schools and parishes commit themselves to spiritual and moral renewal; and that as Church we seek ways to partner with people of good will in the building of a just and harmonious society.

**RESOLUTION #5:** Be it resolved that Catholic parishes, in the spirit of solidarity and stewardship, serve the community by promoting and creating opportunities, structures and programmes to achieve social justice.

RESOLUTION #6: Be it resolved that in keeping with the Catholic position on Creation, our families, schools and parishes recognize our responsibility as stewards of Creation and express this in relevant tangible ways.

RESOLUTION #7: Be it resolved that Catholics be educated and advised concerning matters of respect, reverence and modesty in dress and conduct at all times, particularly during Mass, other religious occasions and parish events. NB: Res. 7 will be achieved if all the other resolutions are achieved.

### **LOCATING CCSJ'S PLAN WITHIN A WIDER CONTEXT:**

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

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

### **OUR MISSION**

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

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

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

### **CORE VALUES**

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

CCSJ's Vision, Mission and Core values remain the same and are in sync with the Archdiocese's Mission Statement and with the Holy Father's Apostolic Letter for the Year of Faith (Porta Fidei).

The Archdiocese's Mission Statement reads: We are the People of God in Trinidad and Tobago, building the Civilization of Love – reconciliation with God, neighbour, creation and self – through:

- The New Evangelization
- Revitalizing Catholic Culture and Identity
- Regenerating the Moral and Spiritual Values of our Society.

CCSJ also has responsibility for linking its work to the other 2 Archdiocesan Pastoral Priorities: The New Evangelization and Revitalizing Catholic Culture and Identity. SIT reminded the Faithful in Catholic News on 5 June, 2011:

“The Mission, to build the Civilisation of Love, is the reason for the Church's existence. It is what we are called to do and the deeper meaning and logic behind all of our activities. The three Pastoral Priorities are three interlocking and inseparable aspects of the Mission of the Church. New Evangelization, Catholic Culture and Identity and Moral and Spiritual Renewal refer back to the threefold mission of Prophet, Priest and King, and as such give focus to these in our unique context.

“In this sense a Pastoral Priority does not really end. It is the moving of the light from one part of the painting (New Evangelization) to another part (Catholic Culture and Identity). Because the Pastoral Priorities are integral to the Mission of the Church, they do not really begin or end. They are given more or less prominence.”

The overall Goals of the three PPs are as follows:

**First:** The New Evangelization: That all Catholics come to know Jesus and live their lives animated by His love, example and values resulting in the evangelization of culture and integral human development.

**Second:** Revitalizing Catholic Culture and Identity: That our Eucharistic worldview, our daily living and our celebrations are in the service of building a culture and identity that keeps the “memory of Jesus” alive; Jesus who died, to gather all who were scattered.

**Third:** Regenerating the Moral and Spiritual Values of our Society: That each Catholic, as a committed disciple of Christ, knows, lives and witnesses to the rich moral teaching of the Church and actively partners with people of goodwill towards the moral and spiritual renewal of Trinidad and Tobago.

## **THE CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (CCSJ)**

### **Draft Pastoral Plan for 2013**

#### **January**

a. PLC (Mr Randy Joseph?) and VLCs (Richard and VLC Team) to strengthen/develop SJ links in parishes and to enhance CCSJ's database in relation to these link persons/teams. VLCs to ask Parish Councils to identify a SJ link person on the Parish Council

CCSJ will continue its efforts to raise awareness of the Faithful/Citizens of the social doctrine of the Church; to encourage them and the wider community:

- to demonstrate our love for God, for our neighbour and for all creation by reaching out in solidarity e.g. to those who are poor/socially excluded and to build the common good;
- to be true witnesses to our faith by integrating our faith with our daily lives.

As CCSJ works to implement the 2nd Pastoral Priority: Revitalizing Catholic Culture and Identity, we have been stressing the need for the Faithful to acknowledge that central to our Catholic identity are love and service (see Matthew 25:35-36). To revitalize Catholic Culture and Identity in our Archdiocese, we must commit ourselves to be active in Ministry. An integral part of our Ministry must be a commitment to promote justice:

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

We will achieve our mission if we stand in solidarity with each other to:

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

- build a nation/world in which truth, justice, love, freedom and forgiveness – the pillars of peace, become a reality.

b. PLC and VLCs to plan activities in parishes on the theme: The Year of Faith and Social Justice

c. Awareness-raising of Pope Benedict XVI's Peace Message for 2013: Blessed are the Peacemakers. Activities to include:

- a panel discussion on CCSJ's monthly Ask Why TV programme on TCN on Tues 22 January 2013;
- CCSJ's Newsletter for Jan will include the Pope's Peace Message
- Leela's article on 29 Dec 2012 will focus on the Peace Message for 2013;
- Sessions for reflection in parishes/Vicariates: to be organised by PLC and VLCs

d. Ongoing activities:

- Workshops focusing on Social Justice and Parables in the Bible (as part of the Year of Faith activities) - in our 5 Vicariates e.g. The Good Samaritan, The Prodigal Son, Lazarus & Dives, The Lost Coin, Lost Sheep etc. (see links below). Also, parishes to focus on the Pope's document: Porta Fidei.

- Working with the team at Mary Care Centre - a sanctuary for unmarried, pregnant, young women. It was founded in 1980 by the late Archbishop of Port of Spain, Most Reverend Anthony Pantin in his concern for and commitment to the preservation of life. The centre is a non-profit organisation funded by donations received from the private and public sector. The objectives of Mary Care Centre are two-fold:

- To provide a safe and secure environment for the pregnant mother to give birth to her child.
- To enable the young mother to be employable at the end of her stay at the Centre.

CCSJ has overall responsibility for the work of the Centre which is being run on behalf of the Archdiocese by a Management Committee of Eternal Light Community. There are currently 6 young women at the Centre.

- Other pro-life work: CCSJ will continue to promote and defend life in all forms and at all stages: from conception until natural death. Other issues that are on the front burner will be the death penalty, abortion, human sexuality – including responding to campaigns e.g. by members of the LGBT community for what our Pope calls “false” rights (see his Peace Message for 2013).

- Maintenance of CCSJ's Website (Webmaster - Raymond Syms)
- CCSJ's monthly Ask Why TV programme on TCN (Channel 10)
- CCSJ's weekly articles in Catholic News
- CCSJ's quarterly Newsletter. Inter alia, the Newsletter is a useful tool for sharing examples of good social justice practices that are being implemented in various parishes in our Archdiocese.
- Education on the Social Doctrine of the Church – to be organised in parishes by PLC and VLCs – in consultation with Leela
- CCSJ to recruit new students for Online Social Justice course – in collaboration with CREDI and Dayton University. CCSJ will continue to draw on the support of those who have completed the course as well as current students on the course
- Production/distribution of SJ resources: PLC and VLCs, in collaboration with CCSJ members e.g. prepare copies of the DVD taken of Dr Kenwyn Nicholls' session on Diabetes to be circulated to parishes; distribute copies of CCSJ's leaflets on various aspects of SJ (see Sr Roberta)
- Collaboration with other Catholic Departments in the Archdiocese and with FBOs, NGOs, CBOs, Government Ministries, regional and international organizations etc.: CCSJ will continue to take the opportunity to collaborate with others within and outside the Church to bring a Catholic Social Justice perspective to discussions
- Facilitating Workshops in Vicariate's on Cardinal Turkson's guidelines: Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection. One Workshop was held at Assumption, Maraval in 2012 and another is schedule to take place on 19 January at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, San Fernando.
- Linking some CCSJ activities to UN Days (at parish and Archdiocesan level)
- Communications strategy – including media releases/media involvement as appropriate
- Personal contact e.g. see those who come to Archbishop's House for assistance or who telephone for help
- Participation by CCSJ's Chair on newly formed HIV/AIDS Committee: comprising members of FBOs – see report in Catholic News of Sun 30 Dec. On Fri 23 Nov, 2012, Msgr Llanos signed a Declaration relating to this issue at an event entitled: Building a Network of Faith Based Leaders for a Better Response to HIV and AIDS in T&T.

- CCSJ to link with Youth Commission to organise Youth Events – Youth and Social Justice – what social justice issues face our youths today? Solutions? Panel discussions, Workshops etc?

- Facilitating VIRTUS training in conjunction with Family Life Commission. The programme focuses “on the education and training of clergy, staff, volunteers, parents, and other adults about the nature of child abuse, child sexual abuse, and how adults can help prevent harm to children. The Protecting God’s Children program turns every parish into a child-safe haven. Through expert trainers, the VIRTUS programs bring education and awareness to the entire faith community, and ongoing training is provided through VIRTUS Online.” The training programme comes with a video: Part 1 = A time to protect God’s children. Here children who have been abused (and actors) share their story. Also, 2 abusers share the strategies they used to ‘lure’ children. Part II = A plan to protect God’s children.

Mahalia Paul, Dominica, is the AEC Coordinator for VIRTUS. Dr Dexter Shim and Mrs Frieda Shim, Family Life Commission, have been identified as our Archdiocese’s Coordinators for the programme. CCSJ’s Chair is a Facilitator. Overall responsibility for the programme lies with the Family Life Commission. To date training sessions have been held with members of the clergy, religious, principals, teachers, workers in Catholic institutions, Catechists etc. Training is ongoing.

- CCSJ to maintain links with TTRF/APRC

## **February**

- a. Media release pleading for modesty in dress and behaviour during Carnival
- b. Pope’s Lenten Message – encourage each parish/Vicariate to organise Sessions to reflect on the Pope’s Lenten Message

## **March**

- a. Cont. from Feb. - Pope’s Lenten Message – encourage each parish/Vicariate to organise Sessions to reflect on the Pope’s Lenten Message
- b. Easter Sunday – 31 March

## **April**

Easter and why social justice matters – reflections at parish level – to be organised by PLC and VLCs.

## **May**

a. Mon 6 May - CCSJ's Retreat (include PLC and VLCs): Theme: We are an Easter People. CCSJ's work must be underpinned by prayer. We must seek to develop our own spirituality/deepen our relationship with God. Our annual retreat provides an opportunity for Members and Staff to come together in prayer and contemplation.

b. May 15: UN Day of Families – Seminar at Santa Rosa Parish Hall from 6 pm– 8 pm. Theme: Justice for The Family, the basic cell of society. Speaker: LR

c. LR in Guyana for meeting of AEC Justice and Peace Commissions and VIRTUS Coordinators and Facilitators (21 – 25 May)

### **June – see ongoing activities**

**Sat 1 June:** Seminar to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pope John XXIII encyclical, Pacem in Terris, which was promulgated on 11 April 1963. (Speaker: Fr Matthew D'Hereaux. Venue: Our Lady of Mt Carmel, Carapichaima – from 9 am – 12 noon).

**Sat 8 June:** CCSJ's Fundraising Dinner at Skippers Restaurant, TT Yacht Club, Bayshore: from 7.30 pm – funds to go to the Anthony Pantin Reintegration Centre (TTRF) for former prisoners.

LR to present paper in Madrid at 5<sup>th</sup> World Congress against the Death Penalty (1 week)

**Wed June 19 = Labour Day:** Richard (VLC) to organise event on The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers – in the Southern Vicariate since that is where the Labour Day March is held (Oropouche to Fyzabad).

### **July – see ongoing activities**

### **August – see ongoing activities**

Independence Day: activities in parishes

### **September – see ongoing activities**

Republic Day: activities in parishes

### **October – see ongoing activities**

Sat 6 Oct - Sat 12 Oct 2013: Respect for Life Week: Plan week of activities

World Coalition against the Death Penalty in TT – Conference – LR to present paper

### **November – see ongoing activities**

**December – see ongoing activities** CCSJ's Christmas Dinner



# CHAIR'S REPORT

## CHAIR'S REPORT FOR 25 SEPTEMBER 2013 MEETING

1. On 29 June I attended an Awards ceremony at Centre Pointe Mall auditorium, Chaguanas. The awards were given to 62 persons from various faith communities in commemoration of T&T's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence - to recognise some religious leaders for their role in nation building. 6 Catholics received awards: Archbishop Joseph Harris, Vicar for Clergy Fr Clyde Harvey, Msgr Christian Pereira, Fr Garfield Rochard, and Canon Max Murphy (deceased), and a gentleman from Fr Martin Sirju's parish. The process was that each member of the IRO was responsible for working with the hierarchy of their respective religious organisation to name persons who should receive an award. I wrote to Fr Martin and Brother Harry, the IRO President, expressing my concern of the 62 persons of faith, only 7 women received awards and none of these were Catholic. I received no response.

2. On 30 June, I participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Seminar for Catholic Businessmen – organised by CTC (see below) at Trinidad Hilton. Although the number of participants was small, I am sure that those who attended benefitted enormously from hearing speakers such as the Deacon who delivered the feature address. The work of Mikkel and the team at CTC is important at a time when TT is striving to strengthen family life and to empower men/fathers. CTC's Facebook page states as follows:

“The Companions of the Transfigured Christ (CTC) is a registered NGO, recognised as a private association of Christ's faithful in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Port of Spain. The 18

Covenant Members and 2 Transfiguration Brothers that make up CTC live either in Trinidad or in Curacao at present. CTC was founded on the 6th of August in the jubilee year of 2000 by Kyle Dardaine, Shad Seaton, and Mikkel Trestrail.

“The community is involved in ministry to primarily men and their families, psychospiritual work with individuals and groups, retreat work, preaching and teaching, and youth and young adult ministry. It also operates the John Paul II Centre on Fatherhood and the John Paul II Therapeutic Clinic.”

3. On Friday 5 July I attended an all day training session entitled: Improving Corporate Governance – organised by the Energy Chamber and held at Cara Suites, Pointe a Pierre. The information provided by Consultants was useful.

4. On Monday 8 July I attended a meeting of the Faith Based Organization for National Action (FBONA) at the organisation’s base at Evangel Temple, Barataria. This is the group that Msgr Llanos asked me to join and represent the Catholic Church – earlier this year. The group has expanded it’s focus from HIV/AIDS to health and family life issues nationally. I have written the organisation’s Bylaws and am in the process of registering FBONA as an NGO. Some members of the IRO are Board also. FBONA is in its infancy at the moment. We wait to see what progress can be made by the group.

5. On Monday 8 July I also met with 3 of CCSJ’s Parish Link Coordinators (PLC) – Dianne, Jo Ann and Deborah, for a training session on social justice issues – from a Catholic perspective. Mikkel was interviewed and appointed to the 4<sup>th</sup> PLC post on 9 July. It is to be noted that I was asked while in London during August, for the PLCs to assist in mobilizing support for the Cathedral Appeal Fundraising efforts. It is hoped that this will not derail CCSJ’s plan of action to promote social justice at parish level.

6. On 11 July I attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> Distinguished Jurist Lecture series - organised by TT Judicial Education Institute (TTJEI) at the Hall of Justice on the theme: The continuing relevance of the jury system in the English Speaking Caribbean. The TTJEI launched its Distinguished Jurist Lecture Series in November, 2011. This year's Featured Speaker was the Honourable Mr. Justice

Marston Gibson, Chief Justice of Barbados. You will note that in his address at the Opening of the 2013-2014 Law Term recently, the Chief Justice, Ivor Archie, advocated the abolition of jury trials for all criminal offences as opposed to just for serious crimes, and further stated that jury trials were too expensive and inefficient. He said the removal of jury trials would improve the criminal justice system.

I have included in the Correspondence, some reports in the media noting responses to this statement by prominent citizens.

7. As you know, CCSJ is involved in partnering with

- Alpha Chambers, TT
- The Catholic Commission for Social Justice
- The Puerto Rican Coalition against the Death Penalty
- The Community of Sant'Egidio, and
- The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty

in organising an International Anti-Death Penalty Conference on Tuesday 1 October at the Law Faculty Auditorium, UWI, St Augustine Campus from 9 am to 6 pm. I urge you all to attend if you can. It is open to all and it's free, so please spread the word. The PLCs have been asked to contact Secondary Schools in their respective Vicariates to ask Principals if they will allow a few 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> form students attend – accompanied by one or two teachers. I have written to Mrs Mangroo, CEBM about this. She and some members of her team will also be attending the Conference. TCN will tape and stream the proceedings live. There will be interpreters – Spanish and English only. Although the Law Faculty and the Institute of International Relations had to pull out of our partnership arrangement, key personnel have been very helpful in assisting us in securing the venue at UWI. The Provisional Agenda is available on CCSJ's Website. The sponsors of the Conference are the UK and EU. About 2 persons from each Caribbean island have been invited to attend the Conference.

On 2 October, a group of about 30 Abolitionists from around the world will meet at Normandie Hotel to launch The Greater Caribbean for Life, of which I am a Member.

## **Experiencing the joy of faith**

Posted by **Webmaster** on November 10th, 2013



by Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ and Director, CREDI

I thank His Grace for allowing me to represent the Archdiocese at two major events at the Vatican recently. Since I had planned to be in London around the time of these events, this facilitated my trip to Rome. The first event was a Conference held during the October 23-25 21<sup>st</sup> Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family (PCF) on the theme *New Anthropological horizons and the rights of the family*.

At the centre of the discussion was the Charter of the Rights of the Family which was presented by the Holy See on October 22, 1983 “to all persons, institutions and authorities concerned with the mission of the family in today’s world”.

H E Msgr Vincenzo Paglia, President of the PCF, introduced the working session and reminded us that it is important to rediscover the rights our families must have. It is significant, he said, that we were meeting at a time when Pope Francis has called a 3<sup>rd</sup> extraordinary general assembly of the Bishops’ Synod to be held in the Vatican from October 5-19, 2014 on the theme: “The Pastoral challenges of the family in the context of Evangelisation.”

On October 25, I was fortunate to be among members of the PCF and Consulters of the PCF when we had a Private Audience with the Holy Father, Pope Francis. Although only a few persons had been identified to greet him personally, he shook hands with each of us. Eloquence failed me as he held my hand with both of his, I simply blurted out: “Holy Father, I am Leela Ramdeen, your Caribbean neighbour from Trinidad and Tobago....” Both he and Msgr Paglia laughed along with me. He asked me to pray for him.

You can read Pope Francis’ excellent address via the following Zenit link:

<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-s-address-to-21st-plenary-assembly-of-the-pontifical-council-for-the-family>. He focused on three key points, referring 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 defend life, especially the most fragile, the weakest.”

Secondly, he reminded us that “the family is founded on matrimony”, the “first sacrament of the human...Spousal and family love also reveals clearly the person’s vocation to love in a unique

way and forever, and that the trials, the sacrifices, the crises of the couple as those of the family itself represent passages to grow in the good, in truth and in beauty...In matrimony one gives oneself completely without calculations or reservations, sharing everything, gifts and renunciations, trusting in the Providence of God.”

Finally, he referred to “two phases of family life: childhood and old age. Children and the elderly represent the two poles of life and also the most vulnerable, often the most forgotten. A society that abandons children and marginalises the elderly cuts off its roots and darkens its future. Every time that a child is abandoned and an elderly person is marginalised, not only is an act of injustice committed but the failure of that society is confirmed. To take care of little ones and the elderly is a choice of civilisation ... The ‘good news’ of the family is a very important part of evangelisation, which Christians can communicate to all, with the witness of life...The truly Christian families are recognised by their fidelity, patience, openness to life, respect of the elderly ... The secret of all this is Jesus’ presence in the family.”

On Saturday, October 26, the Holy Father presided over an event at St Peter’s Square where over 150,000 families from around the world met in a “Pilgrimage of families to the tomb of St Peter for the Year of Faith”. The theme was *Experience the joy of Faith*. We listened to reflections, music and testimonies. It was truly a family affair.

On Sunday, October 27, my five-day stay in Rome ended with the Solemn celebration of the Mass at St Peter’s Square, presided over by Pope Francis. I was fortunate to be given a pass, along with members of PCF and the Consulters, to sit to the right of the altar. Sitting in the third row, I felt truly blessed. What an experience. Our faith is alive!

### **CHAIR’S REPORT : FROM THURS 27 SEPT TO WED 31 OCT 2012**

1. Thurs 27 Sept: I delivered the feature address at the Annual Regional Meeting of the Catholic Students’ Movement on the theme: Faith in the context of the Year of Faith. The session was held at UWI Catholic Chaplaincy. Sr Carla Thomas has replaced Sr Monique as the Chaplain. Christine also joined me at the event which was well attended and included CSM members from across the region. My presentation is available on our website.
2. Mon 1 Oct: I led a prayer session in Tacarigua to observe International day of Older Persons.
3. Tues 2 Oct: CCSJ continues to partner with Family Life Commission to run VIRTUS sessions. Teachers at St Joseph’s RC Pri. School and parishioners at St Joseph were invited to attend the session.

Another VIRTUS session was held on Sat 27 Oct at St Finbar’s for Catechists in the Northern Vicariate

These sessions are well attended. The challenge is to ensure that participants engage in ongoing online training.

4. 6-14 Oct: Respect for Life Week (RFLW) commenced on Sat 6 Oct with Sir Ellis Clarke Memorial Conference on the theme: Respect Life: Be living witnesses to our Faith (linked to the Year of Faith). His Excellency, Archbishop Nicola Girasoli and Archbishop Joseph Harris C.S.Sp. were the feature speakers. Fr Garfield Rochard opened the session with prayer. Sadly, only about 16 persons attended – other than some CCSJ members and staff.

On Sat 13 Oct only 19 persons attended our Panel Discussion on aspects of the Catechism: The Creed, Sacraments, Moral Teachings, and Prayer.

At Emmanuel Community's (EC) Vigil on the theme – held on Friday 12 Oct., once again the turnout was very small and comprised mainly of EC members.

At Eternal Light Community's regular Monday Prayer Session (Mon 8 Oct), there was a large turnout – we were simply 'piggy-backing' on their Charismatic Renewal Prayer session.

On Thurs 11 Oct staff at Archbishop's House gathered together to say the prayers published in Catholic News for RFLW and for the launch of the Year of Faith which took place on Thurs 11 Oct.

Sadly, the Workshop on Diabetes: Prevention and Management, organised to take place during RFLW at St Joseph's RC Church, had to be cancelled and when it was re-scheduled on Sat 20 Oct, only about 4 persons attended. We have taped the session now so that Dr Nicholls will no longer have to go to parishes. CCSJ will have DVDs prepared by Gerry Layne and will send them to parishes for their use.

The "Reflection" held at Our Lady of Mt Carmel RC Church Hall, Bourg Mulatresse, on Sun 14 Oct., and organised by Andrea Joseph-Hutchinson, one of the graduates of the SJ online course, was well attended. I delivered the feature address and thereafter joined Fr Arnold Francis in a panel discussion. The youth group performed some excellent skits highlighting certain injustices in our society.

Sr Christine can report on the Tree planting ceremony in St Joseph's parish. I was pleased to note that a number of parishes focused on environmental justice as part of their RFLW activities.

Sr Roberta can report on Activities at St Theresa's, Woodbrook, as per our Calendar of Events.

We had listed on our Calendar of Events certain activities organised by parishes e.g. Rosary (see Calendar). I am sure that a number of parishes and schools also observed RFLW, however, it does not appear as though all Catholics/parishes/schools/Catholic organisations are on board with the observation of RFLW. CCSJ will continue playing

our part to implement this recommendation from Synod, in the hope that it will resonate in the hearts of the faithful eventually. Any ideas for future observations will be welcomed.

5. His Grace invited the faithful to join him on Thursday evenings from 7 – 8 pm during the month of October, to say the Rosary with him for the Archdiocese and the nation - on the lawn at Archbishop's House. I joined those gathered on 2 occasions. The turnout was excellent.
6. Friday 12 Oct: I was invited to join Rose, Liliias and Gitlin at TCN for a 1 hour session during TCN's telethon to raise funds for TCN's work. Since CCSJ's Ask Why programme is aired free of charge by TCN, I always make it a point to join one of the panels during their annual telethon.
7. Tues 16 Oct: I attended the launch of "Go Teach", a compilation of some of the writings of Archbishop Emeritus Edward Gilbert C.Ss.R. I have purchased a copy for CCSJ and it is available on loan to members (see Correspondence file).
8. Mon 22 Oct (9am-4pm): I attended a forum at NAPA on the theme: Advancing Women's Transformational Leadership. It was organised by the Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister, the Australia High Commission, the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. See Correspondence File for Agenda.

I circulated to members and others information conveyed to those gathered by the Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development about the draft Gender Policy. She said that it is being considered by a Cabinet Appointed Committee at the moment. Hazel Brown, TT's Special Envoy for Women and Children and Chair of the Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women, said in her presentation after Min. Coudray, that the Gender Policy would be "out" soon. It is not clear whether there will be any consultation before it is implemented.

One of the speakers Dr Gabrielle Hosein, sought to champion the cause of the LGBT group and encouraged participants to sign the online petition initiated by UWI students, to urge the Government to launch and implement a Gender Policy.

I have written to Priests for Life, Human Life International and others seeking support to develop a Gender Policy that is Christ-centred. Sarah Flood-Beaubrun is a Saint Lucian Catholic attorney who recently founded the Caribbean Centre for Family and Human Rights (CARIFAM) <http://www.carifam.com/> - former Minister of Government, and Hyacinth Griffith, Lawyers for Jesus, TT, are willing to work with me and others to draft such a Policy.

Piero Tozzi, an attorney for the Alliance Defense Fund, USA, whom I had met at a Conference earlier this year, is also willing to lend support. I will pursue this line of action.

I have spoken to Winston Garcia, Youth Commission, to ask him to mobilise support from Catholic Youths to promote a Catholic response to a Gender Policy. I have also written to others, including Family Life Commission on this issue.

9. Wed 24 Oct: I attended the opening session of the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of UNESCO's Regional Memory of the World Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean – held at NALIS. See information in Correspondence File. I was interviewed after the session - about the importance of recording our “memories”, from a Social Justice perspective.

This morning, Wed 31 Oct, members of the Synod Implementation Team met to discuss a number of issues. Information will be shared at CCSJ meeting

### **Leela Ramdeen: CHAIR's REPORT FOR 28 NOVEMBER 2013 MEETING**

**(last meeting 25 September, 2013)**

1. On 1 October CCSJ participated in an International Conference which we organized, in partnership with: the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Alpha Chambers, Puerto Rican Coalition against the Death Penalty, Community Sant'Egidio entitled: The Death Penalty in the context of public security: Neither right, nor effective. (9-6pm at the Law Auditorium, UWI). Attendance was free. Speakers and Chairs focused on the theme: *Stop Crime, Not Lives!* They were:

Sir Clare Roberts, former Attorney General and Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs for Antigua and Barbuda

Pamela Elder, SC, President of the Criminal Bar, Trinidad and Tobago

Sophia Chote, SC, Vice-President of the Criminal Bar (TT)

Richard Blewitt, UN Resident Coordinator/ UNDP Resident Representative (TT)

Dr. Lloyd Barnett, Jamaica, Greater Caribbean for Life (GCFL)

Carmelo Campos Cruz, Puerto Rico, GCFL & Puerto Rican Coalition against the Death Penalty

Ms. Fenella Wenham, Dominica

Horace Levy, researcher on urban violence and author of *Killing Streets and Community Revival*, Jamaica

Elsworth Johnson, President of the Bar Association, Bahamas

Rev. Peter Espeut, Jamaica, journalist

Carmen Aida Ibarra, Guatemala, Grupo pro Justicia

Gregory Delzin, TT, Attorney-at-Law

Mario Polanco, Guatemala, Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo & GCFL

Mariana Nogales, Puerto Rico, GCFL

Leela Ramdeen, Catholic Commission for Social Justice TT & GCFL



**Testimonies were given by:**

Andrew Douglas, TT, former death row inmate

Selwyn Strachan, Grenada, former death row inmate

Rev. Gwenolyn Ruth Greaves and representatives from Hope Support Group (TT) - a healing/transforming ministry for victims of crime

I would like to thank members of CCSJ who attended and Lorna, Cheryl, Dianne, Jo Ann, and Richard who dealt with Registration etc. Thanks also to Jo Anne Lodge who also assisted during the course of the day.

On 2 October, a group of abolitionists from our Caribbean region, as well as key individuals from The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, the Puerto Rican Coalition against the Death Penalty, Amnesty International, and others, met at Normandie Hotel. At that meeting the Greater Caribbean for Life was officially constituted. I was elected Chair of the organization. Our aim is to work towards the abolition of the death penalty in the Caribbean region and in the world see: [www.facebook.com/GCFLife](http://www.facebook.com/GCFLife)

On Friday 5 October I joined Mikkell and others at St Ann's RC Church for the all-night Vigil organized as part of Respect for Life Week (RFLW) which ran from 6 – 12 October. Sadly, like many of the events organized during the week, attendance was poor. However, where few of us are gathered in His name...

On Sat 6 October RFLW was launched with our annual Sir Ellis Clarke Memorial Conference, held at Living Water Community from 3 pm – 6 pm. Speakers were: Archbishop Harris, Terrence Farrell, Maureen Arneaud, His Excellency Archbishop Nicola Girasoli. I was the Moderator. Please note the additions to the Flyer attached. I attended all the events that CCSJ organized during RFLW. It is hoped that parishes also organized their own events.

On Thurs 10 October, International Day Against the Death Penalty, the European Union showed a film at NAPA, entitled: "Into the Abyss" (2011) subtitled *A Tale of Death, a Tale of Life*. It is "a documentary film written and directed by Werner Herzog about two men convicted of a triple homicide which occurred in Conroe, Texas. Michael Perry received a death sentence for the crime, and Jason Burkett received a life sentence. The film focuses on the two convicts and various people affected by the crime." I attended the viewing as part of CCSJ's concern to promote the sanctity of all life.

On Friday 11 October, staff at the Chancery met in the Chapel at Archbishop's House to say the prayers we published in Catholic News for RFLW.

On Monday 25 and Tues 26 November I participated in a 2-day Symposium organized by The HIV Awareness Unit of The Ministry of The People and Social Development. The Unit partnered with Faith Based Organizations (FBO's) in planning this two day symposium. I represent the Catholic Church on the Faith Based Network of TT. The theme of the event will be

“Beyond Desire: The Role of FBO’s”. The main topic addressed was that of “Idealism versus Realism”, as it relates to HIV and AIDS and its impact on our diverse religious communities. The conference was held at the Signature Hall, # 63 Longdenville Road, Chaguanas. Jo Ann and Dianne also attended the Symposium. My topic was: How can faith communities be a voice and a presence in responding to issues such as HIV and AIDS – Human dignity and Justice issues – stigma and discrimination, poverty, gender inequality, domestic violence, child abuse, stigma and discrimination. My presentation will be uploaded on CCSJ’s website by Raymond.

On Tues 26 Nadine and I were Moderators of Ask Why – discussing the Charter on the Rights of the Family. October marked the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the publication of this Charter by the Holy See.

On Wed 27 November I met with Fr Lumsden and some members of Chaguanas parish to produce a video as part of our Sacred Spaced Project. Hans Hanoomansingh, Radio 107.1, has asked me to produce audio tapes and/or video tapes to air/show on the station’s website in the lead up to Christmas. Gerry Layne taped the interviews and clips of the Church. We will offer each video to TCN to be shown TCN’s on Cable TV Station also. I will require the support of PLCs and VLCs to produce future videos in various parishes.

- **REPORT ON ATTENDANCE OF CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY, HEADED BY MSGR VINCENO PAGLIA**

Theme: New Anthropological Horizons and the Rights of the Family - October 25<sup>th</sup> 2013

- Also – report on Experiencing the Joy of Faith – 2 day event with the Holy Father and 150,000 families from around the world to focus on the Family.
- The event ended with a Mass in front of St Peter’s

- **Experiencing the joy of faith**

- Posted by **Webmaster** on November 10th, 2013

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- by Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ and Director, CREDI
- I thank His Grace for allowing me to represent the Archdiocese at two major events at the Vatican recently. Since I had planned to be in London around the time of these events, this facilitated my trip to Rome. The first event was a Conference held during the October 23-25 21<sup>st</sup> Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family (PCF) on the theme *New Anthropological horizons and the rights of the family*.
- At the centre of the discussion was the Charter of the Rights of the Family which was presented by the Holy See on October 22, 1983 “to all persons, institutions and authorities concerned with the mission of the family in today’s world”.
- H E Msgr Vincenzo Paglia, President of the PCF, introduced the working session and reminded us that it is important to rediscover the rights our families must have. It is significant, he said, that we were meeting at a time when Pope Francis has called a 3<sup>rd</sup> extraordinary general assembly of the Bishops’ Synod to be held in the Vatican from

October 5-19, 2014 on the theme: “The Pastoral challenges of the family in the context of Evangelisation.”

- On October 25, I was fortunate to be among members of the PCF and Consulters of the PCF when we had a Private Audience with the Holy Father, Pope Francis. Although only a few persons had been identified to greet him personally, he shook hands with each of us. Eloquence failed me as he held my hand with both of his, I simply blurted out: “Holy Father, I am Leela Ramdeen, your Caribbean neighbour from Trinidad and Tobago....” Both he and Msgr Paglia laughed along with me. He asked me to pray for him.
- You can read Pope Francis’ excellent address via the following Zenit link:
- <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-s-address-to-21st-plenary-assembly-of-the-pontifical-council-for-the-family>. He focused on three key points, referring 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 defend life, especially the most fragile, the weakest.”
- Secondly, he reminded us that “the family is founded on matrimony”, the “first sacrament of the human...Spousal and family love also reveals clearly the person’s vocation to love in a unique way and forever, and that the trials, the sacrifices, the crises of the couple as those of the family itself represent passages to grow in the good, in truth and in beauty...In matrimony one gives oneself completely without calculations or reservations, sharing everything, gifts and renunciations, trusting in the Providence of God.”
- Finally, he referred to “two phases of family life: childhood and old age. Children and the elderly represent the two poles of life and also the most vulnerable, often the most forgotten. A society that abandons children and marginalises the elderly cuts off its roots and darkens its future. Every time that a child is abandoned and an elderly person is marginalised, not only is an act of injustice committed but the failure of that society is confirmed. To take care of little ones and the elderly is a choice of civilisation ... The ‘good news’ of the family is a very important part of evangelisation, which Christians can communicate to all, with the witness of life...The truly Christian families are recognised by their fidelity, patience, openness to life, respect of the elderly ... The secret of all this is Jesus’ presence in the family.”
- On Saturday, October 26, the Holy Father presided over an event at St Peter’s Square where over 150,000 families from around the world met in a “Pilgrimage of families to the tomb of St Peter for the Year of Faith”. The theme was *Experience the joy of Faith*. We listened to reflections, music and testimonies. It was truly a family affair.
- On Sunday, October 27, my five-day stay in Rome ended with the Solemn celebration of the Mass at St Peter’s Square, presided over by Pope Francis. I was fortunate to be given a pass, along with members of PCF and the Consulters, to sit to the right of the altar. Sitting in the third row, I felt truly blessed. What an experience. Our faith is alive!

**CHAIR’s REPORT FOR 25 SEPTEMBER 2013 MEETING (last meeting 26 June)**

1. On 29 June I attended an Awards ceremony at Centre Pointe Mall auditorium, Chaguanas. The awards were given to 62 persons from various faith communities in commemoration of T&T's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence - to recognise some religious leaders for their role in nation building. 6 Catholics received awards: Archbishop Joseph Harris, Vicar for Clergy Fr Clyde Harvey, Msgr Christian Pereira, Fr Garfield Rochard, and Canon Max Murphy (deceased), and a gentleman from Fr Martin Sirju's parish. The process was that each member of the IRO was responsible for working with the hierarchy of their respective religious organisation to name persons who should receive an award. I wrote to Fr Martin and Brother Harry, the IRO President, expressing my concern of the 62 persons of faith, only 7 women received awards and none of these were Catholic. I received no response.

2. On 30 June, I participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Seminar for Catholic Businessmen – organised by CTC (see below) at Trinidad Hilton. Although the number of participants was small, I am sure that those who attended benefitted enormously from hearing speakers such as the Deacon who delivered the feature address. The work of Mikkel and the team at CTC is important at a time when TT is striving to strengthen family life and to empower men/fathers. CTC's Facebook page states as follows:

“The Companions of the Transfigured Christ (CTC) is a registered NGO, recognised as a private association of Christ's faithful in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Port of Spain. The 18 Covenant Members and 2 Transfiguration Brothers that make up CTC live either in Trinidad or in Curacao at present. CTC was founded on the 6th of August in the jubilee year of 2000 by Kyle Dardaine, Shad Seaton, and Mikkel Trestrail.

“The community is involved in ministry to primarily men and their families, psychospiritual work with individuals and groups, retreat work, preaching and teaching, and youth and young adult ministry. It also operates the John Paul II Centre on Fatherhood and the John Paul II Therapeutic Clinic.”

3. On Friday 5 July I attended an all day training session entitled: Improving Corporate Governance – organised by the Energy Chamber and held at Cara Suites, Pointe a Pierre. The information provided by Consultants was useful.

4. On Monday 8 July I attended a meeting of the Faith Based Organization for National Action (FBONA) at the organisation's base at Evangel Temple, Barataria. This is the group that Msgr Llanos asked me to join and represent the Catholic Church – earlier this year. The group has expanded its focus from HIV/AIDS to health and family life issues nationally. I have written the organisation's Bylaws and am in the process of registering FBONA as an NGO. Some members of the IRO are Board also. FBONA is in its infancy at the moment. We wait to see what progress can be made by the group.

5. On Monday 8 July I also met with 3 of CCSJ's Parish Link Coordinators (PLC) – Dianne, Jo Ann and Deborah, for a training session on social justice issues – from a Catholic perspective. Mikkel was interviewed and appointed to the 4<sup>th</sup> PLC post on 9 July. It is to be noted that I was asked while in London during August, for the PLCs to assist in mobilizing support for the Cathedral Appeal Fundraising efforts. It is hoped that this will not derail CCSJ's plan of action to promote social justice at parish level.

6. On 11 July I attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> Distinguished Jurist Lecture series - organised by TT Judicial Education Institute (TTJEI) at the Hall of Justice on the theme: The continuing relevance of the jury system in the English Speaking Caribbean. The TTJEI launched its Distinguished Jurist Lecture Series in November, 2011. This year's Featured Speaker was the Honourable Mr. Justice Marston Gibson, Chief Justice of Barbados. You will note that in his address at the Opening of the 2013-2014 Law Term recently, the Chief Justice, Ivor Archie, advocated the abolition of jury trials for all criminal offences as opposed to just for serious crimes, and further stated that jury trials were too expensive and inefficient. He said the removal of jury trials would improve the criminal justice system.

I have included in the Correspondence, some reports in the media noting responses to this statement by prominent citizens.

7. As you know, CCSJ is involved in partnering with

- Alpha Chambers, TT
- The Catholic Commission for Social Justice

- The Puerto Rican Coalition against the Death Penalty
- The Community of Sant'Egidio, and
- The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty

in organising an International Anti-Death Penalty Conference on Tuesday 1 October at the Law Faculty Auditorium, UWI, St Augustine Campus from 9 am to 6 pm. I urge you all to attend if you can. It is open to all and it's free, so please spread the word. The PLCs have been asked to contact Secondary Schools in their respective Vicariates to ask Principals if they will allow a few 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> form students attend – accompanied by one or two teachers. I have written to Mrs Mangroo, CEBM about this. She and some members of her team will also be attending the Conference. TCN will tape and stream the proceedings live. There will be interpreters – Spanish and English only. Although the Law Faculty and the Institute of International Relations had to pull out of our partnership arrangement, key personnel have been very helpful in assisting us in securing the venue at UWI. The Provisional Agenda is available on CCSJ's Website. The sponsors of the Conference are the UK and EU. About 2 persons from each Caribbean island have been invited to attend the Conference.

On 2 October, a group of about 30 Abolitionists from around the world will meet at Normandie Hotel to launch The Greater Caribbean for Life, of which I am a Member (see information in Correspondence File)

8. On Sun 21 July I presented a paper at Jesus Explosion at Preysal Secondary School (organized by Fr Ian Taylor and his team) on issues relating to the Draft Gender Policy. My presentation is available on CCSJ's website.

9. Ask Why TV programme on Tues 23 July focused on Youth and Social Justice. Panellists were: Dianne Wells (CCSJ's PLC), Stephanie Belle and Rodney Molligan. We need to provide more opportunities for youths to express their views on issues. This is an issue which PLCs and VLCs can address also.

10. Due to time constraints, our monthly meeting which was scheduled to take place on Wed 24 July, immediately before CCSJ's AGM, was cancelled and only the AGM took place on that date.

11. On 30 August I was interviewed by a journalist from Newsday about CCSJ's view on the upsurge in crime and violence in TT and our views about ways of reducing crime. I enclose in the Correspondence File the report of this interview in the Newsday on Mon 2 Sept.

12. On Sun 1 Sept. I attended the IRO's annual Service for Prayer and Thanksgiving – held in San Fernando. Speakers included Hon Clifton de Coteau, the then Minister of National Diversification and Social Integration; Ag. Cmr of Police, Stephen Williams; and Hans Hanoomansingh, who was the feature speaker.

13. On Tues 3 Sept I was a guest on First Up – Channel 6, with Paul Richards, to discuss the crime situation in TT and to share strategies for action. Such opportunities are welcomed as it gives us a voice in the 'market place' to share our views.

14. On Wed 4 Sept Jo Ann and I attended an all-day stakeholders' consultation on National Strategies for Deportees – organised by the Ministry of the people and Social Development. You may recall that Chairman of the Deportee Task Force (DTF), William Latchman, collapsed and died shortly before he was to speak at the consultation. Minister Glenn Ramadharsingh stated that in October the Vision on Mission team, led by Wayne Chance, would open two facilities - one for women, after a female deportee was raped having had nowhere to turn following her re-introduction into society. - and one for men in the Wallerfield area. It is noteworthy that while action is being taken to meet the needs of deportees, the needs of former inmates appear to be neglected. In his 500 page report, Prisons Inspector, Daniel Khan, made it clear that there needs to be rehabilitation programmes for former inmates. He said that 74% of them return to prison within 3-5 years of release. Clearly, if we want to reduce crime and save lives, we need more effective rehabilitation programmes.

15. On Thurs 5 Sept, I paid a site visit to UWI to see the Law Faculty Auditorium and to meet a Law Lecturer who is assisting me in dealing with issues relating to the venue for the Conference on 1 Oct. That afternoon I met with Msgr Allan Ventour, Vicar for Pastoral Affairs, to discuss plans for Respect For Life Week and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pastoral Priority, for which he now has responsibility with regard to taking a lead in the Archdiocese. Subsequently, I sent him via e-mail the report compiled by Surindra Arjoon who had worked with CCSJ's Standing Committee

on Morals and Values to engage his BA and MA students at UWI in empirical research on these issues. I also sent him a paper written by the then Msgr Jason Gordon on the crisis we face re morals and values in TT, as well as some notes taken during the early meetings of the Standing Committee on Morals and Values. Fr Henry Charles, who was a member of the Committee had made some insightful comments that will be of use to Msgr Ventour as he writes the booklet that will be circulated widely within the Archdiocese on this Pastoral Priority.

16. On Sun 8 Sept I participated in the launch of Trinity Communications Network/LWC's 24/7 Cable TV Station. Prior to that date, TCN only ran 50 hours per week on Channel 10. They were granted a licence recently and have now partnered with Catholic TV stations in various parts of the world to show some of their programmes, as well as their own local programmes. Our Nuncio and His Grace also attended the launch.

17. On Mon 9 Sept I attended a meeting of the Faith Based Organisation for National Action (FBONA), the Board that Msgr Llanos had asked me to sit on as a representative of the Archdiocese. I am the legal officer on the Board and have produced the Board's Bylaws. I am in the process of registering FBONA as an NGO.

18. On 10 September, I met with the Captain of a ship. I will share his concerns, rather than put it in writing as his life is in danger.

19. On 12 Sept. I met with Matt Nottingham, British High Commission, and a representative of the European Union at the British HC, to discuss plans for the Conference on 1 Oct. The UK and the EU are sponsoring the Conference. Inter alia, their funds will pay for at least 2 persons from each island in the Caribbean to attend. They accept that they will only be allowed to speak on Day 2, when a small group of abolitionists meet at Normandie Hotel. It is imperative that people from our region take the lead as speakers on the 1<sup>st</sup> day so that there is no claim that 'foreigners' are 'foisting' this on us.

That afternoon, I held a meeting with CCSJ's PLCs - as part of the regular meetings that are in train.



20. On 14 Sept. I attended the Episcopal Ordination of Msgr Robert Llanos – at Our Lady of Fatima, Curepe, and also the lunch held at Fatima College in his honour. It was indeed a wonderful occasion. You will have read about it in Catholic News last weekend. The presence of about 10 Bishops from our region, as well as the Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency, Nicola Girasoli, added to the joy we all felt. The Nuncio's passionate presentation was well received by those who attended.

21. On 17 Sept I again had to visit the Law Faculty Auditorium at UWI along with a representative of a Company that will provide plants and shrubs (on a rental basis) to be placed in front of the head table for the Conference on 1 Oct.

22. On 18 Sept, Michelle Solomon-Baksh, of Alpha Chambers (one of the partners involved in organizing the Conference), and I held a Media Briefing at Alpha Chambers to share information about the Conference with the Media. Newsday, Express and Catholic News reported on the details shared during the Briefing.

23. On the morning of 19 Sept, I met with His Excellency, President Anthony Carmona, who had asked to see me – Courtesy visit. I had asked him to address participants at the Conference on The Bail Boys Project which he had initiated at the Magistrate's Court in S'do – as a way of reducing serious crime. However, during the meeting he explained why he would rather not join us. The meeting was cordial and he expressed a wish to meet some of the youths who are residents at the facilities run by the Holy Faith Sisters at Credo Foundation For Justice. I have conveyed this information to Sr Roberta.

24. On Friday 20 Sept, Deborah and I attended an all day Stakeholders' Consultation organized by the The Ministry of Health's Population Programme Unit in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) who are "in the process of finalizing a number of projects to enhance the delivery of quality, integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services. These include the following:

- National Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Policy
- National Strategic Plan for Sexual and Reproductive (SRH) 2014-2018
- Three year (3) Operational Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)

A number of stakeholders have been involved at various stages of the developmental process. In this regard a national consultation with a cross section of stakeholders is planned. The aim of the consultation is to facilitate consensus building to finalize the documents.”

CCSJ had not been involved at earlier stages and it is only by chance that I discovered that this Consultation was taking place. I wrote to Dr Ocho, who was in charge of organizing the Consultation, and he granted permission for us to attend. The UN appears to be using a carrot and stick approach to get countries to adopt their plans locally – linked to funding.

25. On Sun 22 Sept, I attended our Republic Day Extravaganza at Jean Pierre Complex – organized by the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration. As Chair of CCSJ, I had received an invitation from the Ministry.

Newsday reported that: “Hundreds of children, teens and young adults, yesterday took part in a parade organised by the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration to help engender greater national pride and patriotism among the youth. The parade began at Independence Square South, Port-of-Spain at 10.45 am and continued along Wrightson Road to the Jean Pierre Complex (JPC). The event culminated in a mid-afternoon concert at that same location... An estimated 1,500 persons participated in the event, which has been described as a way to foster national pride and promote patriotism in citizens, but with a focus on the youth... Youth organisations involved in yesterday’s “Extravaganza” included the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force, Civilian Conservation Corp, Pathfinders, TT Red Cross, Brownies, Girl Guides Association of TT, Scouts Association of TT, as well as members of the Military Led Academic Training (MILAT) and Military Led Youth Programme of Apprenticeship and Reorientation Training (MYPART).”

26. On Monday 23 Sept the Archdiocese showed the film, Madonna Murti, at Fatima College. I was unable to attend. I would be grateful for feedback from any CCSJ member who viewed the film.

27. On 24 September, CCSJ’s Ask Why programme focused on the theme: Regenerating the Moral and Spiritual Values of our Society – linked to Respect For Life Week. Panellists were: Rhonda Earle, Fr Arnold Francis, Deacon Derek Walcott. Nadine and I were Co-Moderators. The challenge we face is ensuring that we explain moral theology in a way that will make it accessible to viewers.

28. On 25 Sept (this morning), I attended SIT meeting. Among the issues discussed were:

a. a review of the showing of Madonna Murti. Members of SIT voted to let His Grace know that the film should not be shown again but that a film that will strengthen the faith of the faithful e.g. a film on the life of Pope John Paul II, be shown as a fundraiser.

b. CCSJ’s plans for Respect for Life Week and for the Conference to be held on 1 October entitled: The Death Penalty in the context of public security: Neither right, nor effective – Law Faculty Auditorium, UWI, St Augustine Campus – free entry.

c. Report submitted by Vicariate Link Coordinators (VLC). It is to be noted that 3 VLCs have been appointed to replace 3 persons who had resigned. There is now a full complement of 4 persons: Richard Smith, Deacon Kester de Verteuil, Lewis Elie-Martineaux, and Candice (surname not given). Deacon Derek will meet with them and will organize a meeting between the VLCs, PLCs and me to ensure that there is proper coordination of the work to be accomplished.

d. Since the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pastoral Priority ‘ends’ at the end of October, parishes will be asked to let us know whether they have accomplished all that they had planned. They will also be asked to prepare a plan for the next Pastoral Priority.

**END**

**CCSJ CHAIR’S REPORT: FROM WED 29 MAY 2013 – WED 26 JUNE 2013**

1. On Saturday 1 June CCSJ held a Seminar at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Carapichaima to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Blessed John XXIII’s encyclical, Peace on Earth. Fr Matthew D’Hereaux was our feature speaker. Sadly, only about 25 persons attended the Seminar. However, those who did attend participated well in the proceedings. The session was taped and will add to our resource bank.
2. On Tuesday 4 June I met with representatives of some of the religious groups that had attended the consultation meetings on the draft Gender Policy - organised by Hon Marlene Coudray, Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development. The Hon. Minister had asked a number of those who had attended – including me, to review the minutes of the meetings and to submit any amendments we may have. The group made a number of amendments and submitted these to the Hon. Minister. It is to be noted that the AEC Bishops at their recent meeting in Guadeloupe - April 13-20, discussed the issue of Gender and Homosexuality and Emeritus Archbishop Reece was appointed to coordinate preparation of a draft pastoral statement on the issue of gender, which will be finalized by the bishops at an IT platform meeting prior to the Permanent Board meeting in January in 2014.
3. On Wed 5 June I attended a meeting of the Synod Implementation Team (SIT). We viewed a film entitled: “Madonna Murti” which may be shown at various venues across the Archdiocese – at a cost to those who attend the viewing. Part of the proceeds is intended to go towards the restoration of our Cathedral .I will share at our meeting my concerns about the film.

4. I was invited, as Chair of CCSJ and as a member of the Greater Caribbean for Life (GCL), to present a paper at the 5<sup>th</sup> World Congress against the Death Penalty. It took place in Madrid from 12-15 June. See CCSJ's website for my presentation and for useful information about the Congress. The Congress was organised by the French association Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM) in partnership with the World Coalition against the Death Penalty and with the support of Spain, Norway, Switzerland and France. More than 1,500 people from over 90 countries attended – including Nobel Laureates, politicians, and representatives from civil society, Bar Associations, and the media. Messages were received from Pope Francis I, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and other prominent international figures. The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, is planning a meeting which is likely to take place in T&T at the end of September 2013 or during the first week in October 2013. The international focus for October 10 World Day against the Death Penalty is the Caribbean.
5. On 18 June I met with Archbishop Rivas to discuss issues regarding the Church's teaching on Trade Unions/the labour movement. He is preparing to address Trade Unions in St Lucia on the social doctrine of the Church on labour issues.
6. On Thurs 20 June I was a guest on CNMG (Ch 6) with Paul Richards to discuss issues relating to the 5<sup>th</sup> World Congress against the Death Penalty. The session went well.
7. On Mon 24 June I met with Msgr Robert Llanos and the VIRTUS Team to discuss issues relating to the VIRTUS programme – in particular the issue about the Safe Environment Committee which all Dioceses in the region are expected to establish. I will discuss at our meeting the outcome of our discussions. Please note also that at the AEC Bishops' meeting in April, they discussed and approved updated Common norms for the diocesan policies dealing with allegations of sexual abuse of minors by priests or deacons. These updated norms have been submitted to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican for approval/recognition before they can be acted upon in our region.
8. On Wed 26 June Synod Implementation Team (SIT) met. I shall share further information at our meeting regarding issues discussed at SIT.
9. On 29 June I shall attend the IRO's event at Centre Pointe Mall, Chaguanas to honour a number of Religious Leaders – past and present – as part of TT's 50<sup>th</sup> Year of Independence. Among those to be honoured are: Archbishop Pantin, Archbishop Harris, Fr Harvey, and Fr Rochard.
10. On Sunday 30 June I shall present a paper at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Catholic Businessmen's Forum – organised by the John Paul II Centre on Fatherhood - from 8.30 am to noon at Hilton Trinidad. I presented a paper at last year's Forum also. The sessions are intended, inter alia, to support faith formation of business/professional Catholic men and to assist them in integrating their faith in their daily lives.

## **CHAIR'S REPORT: FROM WED 24 APRIL TO WED 29 MAY 2013**

1. On Wed 1 May I attended a meeting of the Synod Implementation Team (SIT). One of the key issues discussed is the need for CCSJ to prepare some notes for the next meeting on Wed 29 May (this morning) about what we propose to do regarding the implementation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pastoral Priority (PP) – Regenerating the Moral and Spiritual Values of our Society. This PP comes on stream on 23 Nov – the Feast of Christ the King. I shared with them the attached notes – which included suggestions made at CCSJ's Annual Retreat on Mon 6 May.
2. On Tues 7 May I met with Kyle Dardaine and Jason from John Paul II Centre on Fatherhood to assist them in planning the Centre's 2<sup>nd</sup> Catholic Businessmen's Forum which will take place at Trinidad Hilton & Conference Centre on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012 from 8.30 am to 11.30 am. I have also been asked to be one of the speakers at the event. Last year I also supported this initiative.
3. On Wed 8 May I attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 meetings held at Capital Plaza with the Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development and her team, together with representatives/leaders of various religious communities in TT to discuss the Draft Gender and Development Policy. The first meeting was held on Wed 24 April. My article in Catholic News focused on the main issues raised at these meetings. The Minister undertook to take our concerns to the Cabinet Committee that is dealing with the Draft. While we await further information, I noted that the Draft Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health from the Ministry of Health has included the "socially constructed" definition of "Gender". I wrote to Hon Minister Fuad Khan who undertook to address this. We wait to see if this was done.
4. On Fri 10 May I attended a National Consultation organised by the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development on the theme: "The Future We Want." After the opening speeches, participants were invited to attend 1 of 10 Thematic Workshops. I attended the one on Poverty Reduction and Gender. I wrote about my experience in Catholic News last week.
5. On Tues 14 May I attended a session at Cipriani College (6-8pm) to listen to presentations by SASH Consulting about a programme that this private Company is involved in with the Ministry of Education on "Character Education and Citizenry Development – Planning for Character Education in school, home and community." Sadly, I must agree with the Express Editorial on 17 June 2012 entitled: "Red flag in education." (See copy in Correspondence file). Not only does there appear to be a

conflict of interest in the Government hiring this firm, but having seen the content of some of their DVDs to be used in schools, I believe that taxpayers' money could have been better spent. The Editorial raises serious issues about this programme and the way in which public procurement is done in TT.

6. On Wed 15 May, I addressed about 175 persons at Santa Rosa Parish Church on UN International Day of Families on this theme. Msgr Allan Ventour welcomed parishioners and said the opening prayer. Rebekah Ali-Gouveia shared the session with me and presented information about the natural family. I was able to distribute "Keep God in the Constitution" posters to participants.
7. Thanks for Andes, our "Keep God in the Constitution" posters were printed and widely circulated to parishes, schools etc. The poster included the entire Preamble in our Constitution. This was done to counter the call by the Humanists' call at a meeting on Constitutional Reform, to take "God" out of our Constitution. From the feedback I have received from individuals, a number of priests read out the entire content of the Poster at Masses when they received it.
8. On Friday 17 May, Msgr Robert Llanos granted permission for CCSJ to appoint 4 Parish Link Coordinators (PLC) – an increase of 2 persons to our current established posts of 2.
9. On Mon 3 June, 3 Parish Link Coordinators will commence working with CCSJ:
  - Mrs Deborah Boos (Arima) – she will be responsible for the Eastern Vicariate;
  - Mrs Dianne Wells (Maloney) – she will be responsible for Suburban and Central Vicariates; and
  - Jo Ann Smith (South Oropouche) – she will be responsible for the Southern Vicariate.

I would be grateful if you could assist in identifying someone who may wish to take responsibility for the Northern Vicariate and Tobago.

**Please note** that on Mon 3 June all 3 PLCs will be meeting with Clive and me at Archbishop's House for an **orientation meeting** and to plan an induction programme. You are invited to come along and join us. Please let me know if you will attend the meeting.

10. On Tues 28 May, I met with Msgr Llanos and he has agreed that CCSJ will be invited to address members of the Clergy at their next meeting. You will recall that Fr Clyde Harvey suggested that we meet with members of the Clergy. Msgr Llanos' Admin Asst. will let me know the date of their next meeting. We can use this opportunity to get them to commit to work with us/our Parish Link Coordinators/Vicariate Link Coordinators to promote our goals, including those identified for implementing the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pastoral Priority.

11. On Thurs 16 May I met with Fr Ian Taylor, Tonia Gooding, Rebekah Ali-Gouveia, and Pauline McCarthy to consider the notes of the meeting on the Draft Gender and Development Policy - sent to us by the Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development and to plan our response to the Draft Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy.

From Tues 21 – Sat 25 May I was in Guyana attending a meeting of AEC Episcopal Members of the AEC Justice and Peace Commission and Diocesan representatives of Justice and Peace groups from all across the AEC region – from Dioceses of the English, French and Dutch speaking territories of the Caribbean. The meeting was hosted by Bishop Francis Alleyne. 3 other Bishops were present: Bishop Emmanuel Lafont of Cayenne, French Guyana, Chairman AEC Justice and Peace Commission; Bishop Neil Tiedemann, of Mandeville, Jamaica; and Bishop Wilhelm de Bekker of Paramaribo, Suriname.

The report that I produced about CCSJ's work was circulated to members and is on CCSJ's website. Each Diocese reported on its work on J&P. Each Diocese was asked to identify 3 priorities, from which 1 common priority across the region was identified. The 3 priorities that I identified were:

- a. Eradicating poverty and social exclusion.
- b. Formation of the faithful in the social teaching of the Church.
- c. Regenerating the moral and spiritual values of our society (our Archdiocese's 3<sup>rd</sup> PP).

The common priority across the region was 'b' above. It is generally believed that we must do more to educate the faithful about the social teaching of our Church. Other priority areas identified by other Dioceses include: Domestic Violence; Migration; Human Trafficking; Peace-building; Unemployment; Use of properties owned by the Church, the Government, and private owners; Human dignity and advocacy – development; work with the poor and marginalized.

One day was spent focusing on the issue of Domestic Violence. And in the evening there was a public forum on this theme. I was one of 5 members on the panel to discuss this issue. I worked with Bishop Neil and Victor Scheffers to produce a statement on Domestic Violence. See our Correspondence File and CCSJ's website for a copy.

On the final day we focused on the VIRTUS: Protecting God's Children from child sexual abuse. Pat Neil, the VIRTUS trainer from the USA, joined us. Issues and concerns regarding the operation of the programme in our various countries were highlighted.

## **LEELA RAMDEEN, CHAIR, CCSJ**

### **CHAIR'S REPORT: FROM WED 31 OCT 2012 TO THURS 17 JAN 2013**

10. On Friday 2 November I attended CREDI's graduation at the Centre of Excellence. I am a Director at CREDI and its work is also important to us on CCSJ. Students at CREDI are encouraged to have high expectation of students and to ensure that they promote integral human development of each student. It is hoped that as more and more CREDI graduates return to their schools, the standard of education in our schools will improve. Too many of our students continue to fail in our education system.
11. On Sat 3 November, I attended CREDI's Symposium at Capital Plaza. Lennox Bernard, a Director of CREDI and a Senator, delivered the feature address which, inter alia, highlighted the many ways in which some of our Catholic schools continue to fail students. It is hoped that since a new CEO has been appointed to CEBM (Mrs Sharon Mangroo) that action will be taken to implement the plan that had been drawn up some time ago in the Archdiocese to promote quality assurance systems in our Catholic Schools.
12. On 7 November I ran a session at Our Lady of Fatima from 7pm on CCSJ's/Msgr Llanos' Media Statement the Draft Gender Policy and the implications of such a policy for TT. This was part of the parish's "Know your Faith" series. The turnout was very good and from the questions/comments from the floor, it is clear that many of those present are not au fait with the teaching of the Church on key issues relating to human sexuality. It was a good awareness-raising session which members of the planning team undertook to take forward.
13. On Tues 27 November Tonia Gooding stood in as Moderator of Ask Why TV programme – in my absence. The panel included Dr Peter Gentle and Fr George Pritchett. The theme was: A Catholic approach to human sexuality.
14. On 3 December I was one of the Facilitators at the VIRTUS Training session, Protecting God's Children, held at Holy Name Convent. Participants included staff working at Catholic Residential Homes. Dr and Mrs Shim, Family Life Commission, are the Co-ordinators of this Programme. Training is ongoing.
15. On Wed 5 December I ran a session for Upper 6 Students at St Joseph's Convent, St Joseph, on the Church's teaching on homosexuality. Mary Lochan, who used to be a



member of CCSJ's Education Group – led by Sr Roberta early in the life of the Commission, is a teacher at St Joseph and asked me to focus on this topic. For the entire term students had been discussing issues relating to relationships, marriage and family life. Some of the questions and comments from the floor highlight the need for students in our schools to be aware of the Church's teaching on these issues. Moral relativism is rampant and unless we instill Gospel values in our youths, they may fall prey to "subjective morality."

16. On 6 December I joined other staff at Archbishop's House to meet with Archbishop Harris and Mrs Sharon Mangroo, the newly appointed CEO of CEBM. I took the opportunity to share CCSJ's concern about the need to raise standards in our Catholic schools e.g. by introducing quality assurance systems.
17. I attended a Conference in Jamaica entitled: International Conference "Human Rights, International Law and the Family" – 7-10 Dec. The Jamaica Coalition for a Healthy Society in association with the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship hosted a series of events between December 8 and December 10, 2012 - to mark International Human Rights Day. The major event was the International Conference on December 8, 2012 at the Jamaica Conference Centre, Kingston. In addition to the Conference there was an event entitled "Celebrating God – the Giver of Rights" which was staged at Emancipation Park on Human Rights Day, Monday, December 10.

The conference "explored in detail the basis for new 'rights' and the threats which these 'rights' pose to the traditional, natural family. Speakers included individuals from other countries. At the end of the Conference participants were invited to sign *The Kingston Declaration*, a formal statement outlining the Judeo-Christian ideals for marriage and the natural family, which serves as the basis for a healthy society. I have circulated my report on the Conference to CCSJ members and to others in our Archdiocese. It has been uploaded on our Website.

18. On Tues 18 December I interviewed Mr Randy Joseph for the post of Parish Link Coordinator. Randy is the Chair of the Santa Cruz parish Social Justice team. He is a retired gentleman who has had a long and distinguished career in a number of fields of endeavour e.g. as an Auditor at Central Bank. The post was offered to him but a commencement date is yet to be agreed. There is a second post of Parish Link Coordinator which CCSJ can fill at a later date. We will advertise that post in due course. We will then be in a position to allocate responsibility to the 2 persons in various Vicariates in the Archdiocese.
19. On Wed 19 December, I participated in a 1 hour TV programme on Radio Isaac 98.1 ( a religious station). The focus was issues arising out of the Conference held in Jamaica and the implications for the Draft National Gender Policy in TT.

20. On 24 December, Christmas Eve, Rhonda Maingot, LWC, and I appeared as guests on CNMG TV 6 with host, Paul Richards, to speak about the real meaning of Christmas. Such opportunities enable us to share our faith with the wider community and to address justice issues.
21. On 3 Jan I met with Rev Desmond Austin and Rev Ruth Greaves who had asked me to arrange a meeting with His Grace. They met with me after that meeting. Rev Austin is the President of the TT Council of Evangelical Churches and Rev Greaves runs a support group for women homicide co-victims. They are both eager to partner with CCSJ on justice issues and we will arrange a further meeting in the near future.
22. On Friday 4 Jan, Cherryl Wallace took up her position as Administrative Asst. to CCSJ - replacing Theresa Dukhie who has gone to live in Tobago. Cherryl shares the post with Lorna – it's a job-share.
23. Before Christmas, Msgr Llanos had asked me to organise a meeting with His Grace, him, Gregory Delzin and others to discuss issues relating to the Draft National Gender Policy. This meeting was held on Wed 9 Jan. About 22 persons, besides those listed above, attended the meeting – including Fr Ian Taylor, Fr George Pritchett, Annette, Eldon, representatives from Family Life Commission and Youth Commission and me. Many left the meeting feeling unhappy and have been contacting me regarding the Church's position on some of the legal issues. I shall explain in more detail at our meeting.
24. On Friday 11 Jan, I participated on a Forum on Relationships held at St John the Baptist Church, St John's Rd., St Augustine and organised by the Suburban Vicariate. I was asked to speak on same-sex relationships. Other individuals made presentations on: relationship with self, God, Mary, parents, and the opposite sex. There was also a presentation on *Understanding, managing and resolving relationship issues*. The forum highlighted the fact that there needs to be more sessions like this in our Archdiocese.
25. On Sunday 13 Jan, I attended Archbishop Harris' Vocations Week Lime – held at Archbishop's House and dedicated to promote vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life.
26. I would like to remind members to try and attend CCSJ's Workshop which we are organizing in partnership with Msgr Christian Pereira, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, San Fernando, on Sat 19 Jan from 9.30 am to 12.30 pm followed by lunch. The Workshop will focus on Cardinal Peter Turkson's guidelines: Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection.
27. Please note also that Msgr Llanos signed a Declaration of Commitment and Call to Action on 23 Nov 2012, at a Symposium with Heads of Denominations entitled: Building a Network of FBOs for a better response to HIV and AIDS in T&T. The session

was reported in Catholic News in which Msgr Llanos stated that the Chair of CCSJ will represent the Archdiocese on the Committee that was formed to take forward commitments made in the Declaration. The first meeting of this Committee will be held on Wed 30 Jan at Curepe Anglican Church and I shall attend.

28. Thurs 27 Sept: I delivered the feature address at the Annual Regional Meeting of the Catholic Students' Movement on the theme: Faith in the context of the Year of Faith. The session was held at UWI Catholic Chaplaincy. Sr Carla Thomas has replaced Sr Monique as the Chaplain. Christine also joined me at the event which was well attended and included CSM members from across the region. My presentation is available on our website.
29. Mon 1 Oct: I led a prayer session in Tacarigua to observe International day of Older Persons.
30. Tues 2 Oct: CCSJ continues to partner with Family Life Commission to run VIRTUS sessions. Teachers at St Joseph's RC Pri. School and parishioners at St Joseph were invited to attend the session.

Another VIRTUS session was held on Sat 27 Oct at St Finbar's for Catechists in the Northern Vicariate

These sessions are well attended. The challenge is to ensure that participants engage in ongoing online training.

31. 6-14 Oct: Respect for Life Week (RFLW) commenced on Sat 6 Oct with Sir Ellis Clarke Memorial Conference on the theme: Respect Life: Be living witnesses to our Faith (linked to the Year of Faith). His Excellency, Archbishop Nicola Girasoli and Archbishop

Joseph Harris C.S.Sp. were the feature speakers. Fr Garfield Rochard opened the session with prayer. Sadly, only about 16 persons attended – other than some CCSJ members and staff.

On Sat 13 Oct only 19 persons attended our Panel Discussion on aspects of the Catechism: The Creed, Sacraments, Moral Teachings, and Prayer.

At Emmanuel Community's (EC) Vigil on the theme – held on Friday 12 Oct., once again the turnout was very small and comprised mainly of EC members.

At Eternal Light Community's regular Monday Prayer Session (Mon 8 Oct), there was a large turnout – we were simply 'piggy-backing' on their Charismatic Renewal Prayer session.

On Thurs 11 Oct staff at Archbishop's House gathered together to say the prayers published in Catholic News for RFLW and for the launch of the Year of Faith which took place on Thurs 11 Oct.

Sadly, the Workshop on Diabetes: Prevention and Management, organised to take place during RFLW at St Joseph's RC Church, had to be cancelled and when it was re-scheduled on Sat 20 Oct, only about 4 persons attended. We have taped the session now so that Dr Nicholls will no longer have to go to parishes. CCSJ will have DVDs prepared by Gerry Layne and will send them to parishes for their use.

The "Reflection" held at Our Lady of Mt Carmel RC Church Hall, Bourg Mulatresse, on Sun 14 Oct., and organised by Andrea Joseph-Hutchinson, one of the graduates of the SJ online course, was well attended. I delivered the feature address and thereafter joined Fr Arnold Francis in a panel discussion. The youth group performed some excellent skits highlighting certain injustices in our society.

Sr Christine can report on the Tree planting ceremony in St Joseph's parish. I was pleased to note that a number of parishes focused on environmental justice as part of their RFLW activities.

Sr Roberta can report on Activities at St Theresa's, Woodbrook, as per our Calendar of Events.

We had listed on our Calendar of Events certain activities organised by parishes e.g. Rosary (see Calendar). I am sure that a number of parishes and schools also observed RFLW, however, it does not appear as though all Catholics/parishes/schools/Catholic organisations are on board with the observation of RFLW. CCSJ will continue playing our part to implement this recommendation from Synod, in the hope that it will resonate in the hearts of the faithful eventually. Any ideas for future observations will be welcomed.

32. His Grace invited the faithful to join him on Thursday evenings from 7 – 8 pm during the month of October, to say the Rosary with him for the Archdiocese and the nation - on the lawn at Archbishop's House. I joined those gathered on 2 occasions. The turnout was excellent.
33. Friday 12 Oct: I was invited to join Rose, Liliás and Gitlin at TCN for a 1 hour session during TCN's telethon to raise funds for TCN's work. Since CCSJ's Ask Why programme is aired free of charge by TCN, I always make it a point to join one of the panels during their annual telethon.
34. Tues 16 Oct: I attended the launch of "Go Teach", a compilation of some of the writings of Archbishop Emeritus Edward Gilbert C.Ss.R. I have purchased a copy for CCSJ and it is available on loan to members (see Correspondence file).
35. Mon 22 Oct (9am-4pm): I attended a forum at NAPA on the theme: Advancing Women's Transformational Leadership. It was organised by the Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister, the Australia High Commission, the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. See Correspondence File for Agenda.

I circulated to members and others information conveyed to those gathered by the Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development about the draft Gender Policy. She said that it is being considered by a Cabinet Appointed Committee at the moment. Hazel Brown, TT's Special Envoy for Women and Children and Chair of the Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women, said in her presentation after Min. Coudray, that the Gender Policy would be "out" soon. It is not clear whether there will be any consultation before it is implemented.

One of the speakers Dr Gabrielle Hosein, sought to champion the cause of the LGBT group and encouraged participants to sign the online petition initiated by UWI students, to urge the Government to launch and implement a Gender Policy.

I have written to Priests for Life, Human Life International and others seeking support to develop a Gender Policy that is Christ-centred. Sarah Flood-Beaubrun is a Saint Lucian Catholic attorney who recently founded the Caribbean Centre for Family and Human Rights (CARIFAM) <http://www.carifam.com/> - former Minister of Government, and Hyacinth Griffith, Lawyers for Jesus, TT, are willing to work with me and others to draft such a Policy.

Piero Tozzi, an attorney for the Alliance Defense Fund, USA, whom I had met at a Conference earlier this year, is also willing to lend support. I will pursue this line of action.

I have spoken to Winston Garcia, Youth Commission, to ask him to mobilise support from Catholic Youths to promote a Catholic response to a Gender Policy. I have also written to others, including Family Life Commission on this issue.

36. Wed 24 Oct: I attended the opening session of the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of UNESCO's Regional Memory of the World Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean – held at NALIS. See information in Correspondence File. I was interviewed after the session - about the importance of recording our “memories”, from a Social Justice perspective.
37. This morning, Wed 31 Oct, members of the Synod Implementation Team met to discuss a number of issues. Information will be shared at CCSJ meeting.

You will note that two former chief justices, Michael de la Bastide and Satnarine Sharma, have come out in support of the abolition of jury trials as suggested by Chief Justice Ivor Archie. However, there have been mixed feelings about this. Because this is a social justice issue, I share with you below an extract from an article in the Guyana Starbroek News about the issue.

[\(http://www.stabroeknews.com/2013/news/regional/09/22/tt-ex-cjs-support-call-to-abolish-trial-by-jury/ \)](http://www.stabroeknews.com/2013/news/regional/09/22/tt-ex-cjs-support-call-to-abolish-trial-by-jury/)

“Criminal attorney Daniel Khan (and Inspector of Prisons) said that should trial by jury be abolished, he will withdraw from all cases at the High Court in protest.

Khan said the jury trial was T&T’s landmark against arbitrary executive power “and the proposed bill seeks to threaten this”.

But he added that such moves must be resisted “as it saps and undermines this sacred right by introducing new and arbitrary methods of trial”.

“Jury trials are considered to be part and parcel of a democratic society and the act seeks to curtail the people’s participation in the administration of the criminal justice system,” Khan said.

Admitting there was no expressed constitutional right of an accused to have a trial by jury, Khan said it could be argued that as a matter of settled practice such a right “exists by virtue of the constitutional right to due process”.

Citing the example of police misconduct, Khan said judges may not know the reality of police brutality and police conspiracies which are issues that often arise in many criminal cases.

“The common man is more aware of these occurrences and better equipped to resolve issues involving the creditability of police officers,” he said.

“I am of the opinion that the individual biases of a particular juror are dismissed by their collective deliberation in the jury room,” he added.

#### What legal minds say

Former chief justice Michael de la Bastide:

In a brief telephone interview with the Sunday Express, de la Bastide said he supported the abolition of jury trials as outlined by the current Chief Justice.

“I think the CJ made a very strong case and the points he advanced have a lot of merit,” he said.

Saying he was of the view that people had a sentimental attachment to the jury system, the former CJ said several countries in the world had bypassed the jury system.

Stating that expenses, delay and even the possibility of intimidation were significant disadvantages to the judicial system, de la Bastide said: “I think the main concern about abolishing juries should be for the protection of judges in terms of providing them with adequate security”.

Told there could be the perception that a judge might become corrupt, the former judge said:

“I do not accept for a moment the society is so corrupt we cannot find suitable persons to entrust with the decision in criminal and civil cases. I don’t think there is any evidence to support that judges will give a corrupt decision.”

Former chief justice Satnarine Sharma:

“I see nothing objectionable with the suggestion,” Sharma said last week.

Adding that a judge alone should not be presiding, Sharma said an expert in the field of the case being tried should also be present.

“Whether it’s a ballistic or forensic expert, someone in that field should also be present,” he said.

Of concern to Sharma though, was if the declaration to abolish jurors will be illegal, adding if this was the case, then the Constitution needed to be amended.

Former attorney general Ramesh Lawrence

Maharaj SC

He believes the right to jury trial “is an important right which over the centuries has been recognised to give to individuals the right to have their peers determine whether they are guilty or not of criminal offence or not”.

Maharaj said if taken away, it will be important for all stakeholders to have a say and be consulted on the new policy.

Maharaj said studies should also be conducted to determine if judges were able to dispose of matters on an expedited basis as opposed to jurors.

Saying that some judges took a long time to give decisions in civil matters, Maharaj wondered whether the abolition would now mean that the system would become more clogged with criminal matters.

“It needs serious consideration and the government must embark on a national consultancy and if necessary a referendum,” he said.



Criminal attorney Osbourne Charles SC:

Greater management is needed, says Charles

A criminal attorney for the past 37 years, Charles said no jury trials needed to be “better thought out and getting rid of jury trials is not one of the options”.

“If one looks at the reasoning, at times you find difficulty in understanding that getting rid of jury trials will speed up the judicial process...speeding up the judicial process requires just greater management and anyone who has experience around the courts would understand how and why and how people are frustrated in the courts in getting their matters heard,” he said.

Chairman of the Law Reform Commission Samraj Harripaul, SC:

Harripaul said the suggestion of trials without juries was engaging the attention of his Commission and is “something which needs some serious thinking”.

Harripaul said past precedence has shown that accused individuals have a sense “of security with our peers judging us”.

He said complex cases such as having 12 accused was challenging and as such jury trials would not be ideal.

The chairman said society was evolving and one needed to take into consideration that the average man on the street was hesitant to engage in jury duty. Noting there were countries which had already adopted the judge being the lone party presiding, Harripaul said the Commission’s next step will be to meet with the Attorney General and the changes “will go sooner than we think”.

**SEE ALSO:**

**There should be no further delay in ending jury trials – Ramkarran**

September 23, 2013 · By [Stabroek editor](#) ·

<http://www.stabroeknews.com/2013/news/stories/09/23/there-should-be-no-further-delay-in-ending-jury-trials-ramkarran/>

Former Speaker of the National Assembly Ralph Ramkarran says there should be no further delay in the ending of jury trials here.

In a column the last Sunday Stabroek, Ramkarran referred to a column he had done in June last year on this subject and adverted to a recent speech by Trinidadian Chief Justice Ivor Archie raising the question of whether jury trials should be abolished.

On September 16, Justice Archie in delivering the opening address to the 2013/14 law term reviewed the system of jury trials as he said there was concern that the quality of justice received was questionable.

He said that the Chief Justice pointed out that there is no constitutional right in Trinidad and Tobago to trial by jury, which Ramkarran says also applies in Guyana. However, the argument in support of jury trials is that “juries are more in touch with life on the ground and that somehow translates into a truer verdict.” Justice Archie argued that this is far less significant where the issue is the determination of the legal issue of guilt or innocence based on complex evidence for which juries are not trained.

Ramkarran said that another irresistible argument advanced by Chief Justice Archie is that due to the secrecy of the deliberations of juries, the determination of guilt or innocence is neither transparent nor accountable. The Chief Justice suggested that this violates the fundamental principles of transparency and accountability in the dispensation of justice. He noted that a magistrate or judge has to give reasons for decisions while juries do not.

While the Chief Justice advanced arguments in favour of abolition of jury trials, Ramkarran noted that he did not actually call for it. But he said that “we need to bite the bullet” and urged that a decision ought to be made on whether to continue trial by jury.

Restating the reasons for abolishing jury trials he had advanced last June, Ramkarran said: “In recent years the rate of conviction in jury trials in Guyana has declined considerably even taking into account investigatory deficiencies and prosecutorial lapses. Also, many convictions are overturned on appeal because of inadequate summing up by judges to juries. At the end of every criminal case tried in the High Court the Judge is required to assess the evidence and instruct the jury on the law. The number of appeals which have been upheld for this reason is extremely high.

“For these reasons there should no longer be any delay in consideration of the proposition that jury trials should be abolished with such safeguards as are necessary to protect the rights of accused persons and prevent state interference, but at the same time to reduce the possibility of guilty offenders escaping justice because of flaws and deficiencies in our system of justice.”

Ramkarran added: “I believe that on the scale of things, trial by jury is not an issue of paramount concern to most people. But crime is escalating and juries have continued to free the most violent criminals in the face of compelling evidence. I have not kept any figures and no

statistics are published but I would not be surprised if less than five persons have been convicted in the last twenty trials. And it is not all because of faulty police investigations or incompetent prosecution.”

## **Mixed views on abolishing trials by jury**

Published: TT Guardian

Wednesday, September 18, 2013 [Geisha Kowlessar and Derek Achong](#)

The suggestion to abolish jury trials for all criminal offences has received mixed reviews from members of the legal fraternity. Attorney General Anand Ramlogan said the proposal was nothing new as it was discussed with Opposition members during crime talks three weeks ago at the International Waterfront Centre, Wrightson Road, Port-of-Spain.

Ramlogan, who said he took a note on the issue to Cabinet a year ago, described the proposal as a “revolutionary change for the criminal justice system.” He, however, admitted the initiative should be introduced on a phased basis. “I favour a phased approach and perhaps an introduction with violent crime, gun-related and drug-trafficking offences in the first instance,” Ramlogan said, during a telephone interview yesterday. He said once public confidence was gained then the initiative could be extended.

Speaking at the opening of the 2013/2014 law term on Monday, Chief Justice Ivor Archie suggested the abolition of jury trials for all criminal offences as opposed to just for serious crimes. He complained jury trials were too expensive and inefficient. Archie urged the removal of jury trials would improve the criminal justice system.

Contacted yesterday, Senior Counsel Dana Seetahal said the reason to abolish the trials should not be done to ease the backlog of cases alone. She said: “I think there are others reasons. If it is that the jury trial system is not functioning, as it is desired, then that will be one basis for abolishing it. “But remember you have this system of jury trials which we inherited from the English since time immemorial. I don’t think it is something that should likely be abolished.

“It has to be assessed properly for what offences. It is not something I suggest could ever come across totally.” She drew reference to the United Kingdom, where jury trials have been abolished for serious fraud cases. She added: “They have opted to go for judge trials because of the technical nature of the matters.” The notion of being tried by peers also has been entrenched in society, Seetahal said. “Persons have been saying that they trust the jury system more because of being tried by their peers.

“Should that be supplanted by one single judge when you are dealing with something as sacrosanct as the liberty of the citizens... so that is really a serious matter,” Seetahal said. Saying public’s perception was also critical to the success of the initiative she added there were instances where “some judges have shown themselves in the past not to be as “sound as you

like.” Attorney and public relations officer of the PNM Faris Al-Rawi yesterday welcomed the suggestion by the Chief Justice.

Al-Rawi who practices civil law said he had witnessed reforms in the civil justice system through aggressive implementation of “reformed civil procedure rules and tighter application of the judiciary’s tolerance for delays in the system. “I am also well accustomed to a judge as a sole arbiter. There is clear logic and merit in the Chief Justice’s considerations as to the abolition of trials by jury,” Al-Rawi added. He said the PNM was considering the party’s position in relation to “this issue and larger reforms.”

## **THE CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**invites you to attend a**

**Conference to launch**

### **RESPECT FOR LIFE WEEK 2013**

**Date:** Saturday 5 October

**Time:** 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

**Venue:** Living Water Community, 109 Frederick Street, Port of Spain

**Theme:** *Regenerating the Moral and Spiritual Values of our Society*

**Speakers include:**

- *Archbishop Joseph Harris*
- *Dr Terrence Farrell, Director of CREDI, former Deputy Director of TT’s Central Bank and author of “The Underachieving Society: Development Strategy and Policy in Trinidad and Tobago 1958-2008”*
- *Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ*

Light Refreshments will be served

Respect for Life Week runs from Saturday 5 October to Saturday 12 October

**For further information, contact CCSJ's Office on 290 1635 or 622 6680**

## **MEDIA RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Invitation to Media Conference**

Members of the print and electronic Media are invited to attend a Media Conference on **Wednesday 18** September at **10:00 am** at Alpha Chambers, **22 Pembroke Street, Port of Spain.**

The Conference entitled: ***The Death Penalty in the context of Public Security: Neither right, nor effective*** will take place on **1 October 2013** at the Law Faculty Auditorium, UWI, St Augustine Campus, from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. This Conference will take place in advance of the 11<sup>th</sup> World Day Against the Death Penalty. This year the World Day is dedicated to the Greater Caribbean region.

The Conference is being organized by The Greater Caribbean for Life (GCFL), in partnership with:

- Alpha Law Chambers, TT;
- The Catholic Commission for Social Justice, TT;
- The Puerto Rican Coalition against the Death Penalty;
- The World Coalition against the Death Penalty (WCADP);
- Community of Sant'Egidio.

**The Conference is open to EVERYONE. Attendance is FREE**

- Hear prominent Caribbean & worldwide abolitionist speakers at a plenary session!
- Participate in lively workshops!
- Hear testimonies from former death row Inmates!
- Listen to testimonies from an organization working with victims of crime!
- Witness the Official Launch of the Greater Caribbean for Life (GCFL).

**Speakers and Chairs include:**

Hon. Rev. Ronald Thwaites, Minister of Education, Jamaica

Pamela Elder, SC, President of the Criminal Bar, Trinidad and Tobago

Sophia Chote, SC, Vice-President of the Criminal Bar (TT)

Richard Blewitt, UN Resident Coordinator/ UNDP Resident Representative (TT)

Dr. Lloyd Barnett, Jamaica, Greater Caribbean for Life (GCFL)

Carmelo Campos Cruz, Puerto Rico, GCFL & Puerto Rican Coalition against the Death Penalty

Horace Levy, researcher on urban violence and author of *Killing Streets and Community Revival*, Jamaica

Rev. Peter Espeut, journalist, Jamaica

Kevin Baldeosingh, Journalist, author, and member of the Media Association of TT

Carmen Aida Ibarra, Guatemala, Grupo pro Justicia

Gregory Delzin, TT, Attorney-at-Law

Mario Polanco, Guatemala, Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo & GCFL

Mariana Nogales, Puerto Rico, GCFL

Leela Ramdeen, Catholic Commission for Social Justice TT & GCFL

**Testimonies from:**

Andrew Douglas, TT, former death row inmate

Selwyn Strachan, Grenada, former death row inmate

Rev. Gwenolyn Ruth Greaves and representatives from *Hope Support Group* (TT) - a healing/transforming ministry for victims of crime.

To attend the Media Conference and/or to register for the Conference on 1 October, contact Leela Ramdeen on 1-868-622-6680, or 1-868-299 8945 or write to her at: [socialjustice@rcpos.org](mailto:socialjustice@rcpos.org)

Leela Ramdeen, Member of The Greater Caribbean for Life; Chair, The Catholic Commission for Social Justice; Attorney-at-Law; & Education Consultant.

Tel: 299 8945

**1st OCTOBER 2013**

9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Law Faculty Auditorium

University of the West Indies

St Augustine Campus

Trinidad & Tobago

**Open to EVERYONE**

**Attendance is FREE**

- *Hear prominent Caribbean & worldwide abolitionist speakers at a plenary session!*
- *Participate in lively workshops!*
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Rev. Gwenolyn Ruth Greaves, Hal Greaves and representatives from Hope Support Group (TT) - a healing/transforming ministry for victims of crime.



## **Called to be counter-cultural**

Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ (<http://rcsocialjusticett.org>) & Director, CREDI

As I looked at the beaming faces of those who filled the pews and chairs at the Church, Our Lady of Fatima, Curepe, to experience the Episcopal ordination of Msgr Robert Llanos as Auxiliary Bishop of Port of Spain on Sat 14 September, my heart filled with joy that our Church is alive and present in T&T.

On behalf of members of CCSJ, I congratulate His Lordship, Bishop Llanos. We promise to continue to work with you and His Grace, Archbishop Joseph Harris, as together, you Shepherd God's people – teaching, sanctifying, governing, and striving to build the civilization of love.

His Grace's message during Mass included a reminder to the faithful that "We are called to make holiness the defining characteristics of our lives." He urged us to support Bishop Llanos whose "Yes" to your call to the priesthood "was the right thing...It is all of us together or not at all," he said.

**Together** we are the Body of Christ; together we are Church. Each of us has a responsibility to carry forward the Mission of our Church; to build God's Kingdom on earth.

His Grace reminded us that God's word calls us to be counter-cultural: "We are a people of hope. We turn to God's word to hear what God has to say to us. Preach the Gospel in season and out of season...We live in a culture in which we seek more and more. St Paul calls us to imitate Christ in his self-emptying to be totally available for others."

On a number of occasions Pope Francis has called the faithful to be counter-cultural. Earlier this year he said: "Belief in God makes us bearers of values that often do not coincide with the fashion and opinion of the moment, and calls on us to adopt standards and behaviours that do not belong to the common way of thinking. The Christian should not be afraid to swim against the tide to live his/her own faith, resisting the tendency to conform."

Saturday 14, the Feast of the triumph of the Holy Cross, also marked the second anniversary of the Episcopal ordination of Fr Joseph Harris as Coadjutor Archbishop of Port of Spain. Archbishop Girasoli, Apostolic Nuncio, emphasized the need for "happy and enthusiastic Catholics" who should be on the side of the poor, a voice for the voiceless; working in partnership with the Government and others to serve the people – regardless of their religious persuasion. He reminded Bishop Llanos that the Office of Bishop is not an "honour"; "not a position of power." He must "become the servant of all...Be humble, be humble, be humble! Imitate Pope Francis..." From my work with Bishop Llanos on the Synod Implementation Team,

I know of his humility. His motto on his Coat of Arms: “*Do whatever he tells you*”, taken from our Lady’s words uttered at the Wedding Feast of Cana, also reflects his humility.

His Excellency rightly reminded us that we need young men to give themselves to the service of the Church. Let us pray for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and to religious life. It is significant that he acknowledged the work of Religious Sisters. He said: “I see so many Religious Sisters. They are the stars of the Catholic Church.”

This statement reminded me of the words expressed at the celebration of the Eucharist at the Carnival Mass - St Mary of the Angels, London, in August when we celebrated the golden jubilee of T&T born, Sr Monica Tywang, a religious Sister of the Order of La Sagesse (Daughters of Wisdom).

I can attest to the statement made at the Mass that Sr Monica “has an impressive 50 year record of sterling social and community work, and is known for her far reaching pastoral care to people across all sectors of society...Her work, specifically with the Caribbean community across Britain, has been tireless... She is active on various boards and community groups including the British Caribbean Association, the Mary Seacole Memorial Association, and the Catholic Commission for Racial Justice.” She has been a key contributor to the development of Children’s Carnival in Notting Hill Carnival.

Sr Monica is also a trained nurse. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the late Cardinal Hume appointed her to work with the Caribbean Chaplaincy team in the Diocese of Westminster. Sr Monica was based at St Mary of the Angels Parish, Bayswater and worked closely with the late Fr Michael Hollings.

For your 50 years of love and service to humankind, I salute you, Sr Monica.

### **CCSJ Chair’s comments on 2014 budget**

Please note that this is not a critique of the entire 2014 budget.

Our national budgets increase annually – with catchy slogans as themes. The 2014 budget, entitled: *Sustaining growth, securing prosperity*, is the highest ever. The Government proposes to spend \$61.398 billion and collect \$55.041 billion. Our estimated deficit during the 2014 fiscal year will be \$6.357 billion (3.6 per cent of GDP). The challenge for TT, as for many countries,

is to ensure that plans to balance the budget/reduce annual deficits over a fixed period of time will materialise. The annual mismatch between income and expenditure cannot be sustained in the long term. Inter alia, national debt could adversely impact on the stability and security of future generations.

While the 2014 budget presentation included a list of achievements, what is missing is an impact assessment of how last year's budget, for example, improved the quality of people's lives. Budget execution must be coupled with transparency and accountability. This is an essential element of good governance. Were performance targets met in each sector?

Sadly, the budget contains no bold, new measures for improving our economy and the lives of our people. Once again, Education was allocated the largest slice of the budget (\$9.820 billion) and we still have no national quality assurance measures in place to assess the quality of teaching and learning in our educational institutions; no accurate statistics about the number of our citizens who are illiterate/semi-literate; no public details emanating from the 2012 Survey of Living Conditions that would guide policies and programmes; no vision about how the budget will help some of our people move from dependency to empowerment and how we will become a knowledge-driven economy – drawing on the talent and creativity of our people. Integral human development must be at the heart of our budgets.

Once again it is proposed that new Hospitals will be constructed in Point Fortin, Arima, Sangre Grande and Chaguanas and that San Fernando hospital will be upgraded. For another year people in these areas may wait in hope. The health system, in general, remains in a sorry state.

Our budgets reflect our national priorities. Will the paltry sum of \$1.324 billion allocated to Agriculture, help us to implement our *National Food Production Action Plan* and meet the needs of this sector? We must step up our efforts to reduce our approx. \$4 billion food import bill and develop our ability to 'feed ourselves'. And why are we planning to use land in Guyana for agriculture? I ask, as deceased Prof Spence asked after last year's budget presentation: "What has happened to the rest of the 68,599 acres of Caroni (agricultural) land?"

If crime reduction is a priority, then, sadly, the budget does not address how the root causes of crime will be addressed. Installing more CCTV cameras, recruiting more police officers, reintroducing police highway patrol and 32 community police units will not, on their own, create a safer society. We need a comprehensive crime plan that will address issues such as ongoing training, effective management and deployment of police officers, and ridding the Service of 'rogue cops'. We need to link budgetary allocation to a plan that is multi-sectoral and multi-faceted.

The different messages from the Minister of Finance and the PM, regarding whether or not there will be a three phased approach to Property Tax, are unfortunate and only serve to confuse and frustrate the public.

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## **SEE CHAIR'S REPORTS FOR 2012 ALSO – BELOW:**

### **CHAIR'S REPORT FOR JAN 2012 MEETING**

Since our last meeting on 20 December, 2011, the following are some of the activities in which CCSJ has been involved:

1. On 21 Nov, winners of our 2011 **Respect For Life Week Essay Competition** collected their prizes – Gerard and Jon-Raphael Sealy (Under 14 years) and Ottrisha Carter (14-19 years). A

photo was published in Catholic News showing them with their prize money. I would like to record our thanks to Sr Roberta, Beverly and Shirley (HR Dept), for judging the competition.

2. On Fri 23 Dec I was a guest on **CNMG** to share information about our then outgoing Archbishop, Edward Gilbert C.Ss.R and our incoming Archbishop, Joseph Harris C.S.Sp. This also gave me an opportunity to address certain social justice issues.
3. On Wed 28 Dec I met with 2 persons who live in the UK but have Grenadian dual nationality. They were concerned that the Catholic Church had not spoken out in Grenada against injustice perpetrated against a Canadian/Grenadian man, **Oscar Bartholomew**, who was allegedly beaten to death by a number of policemen in Grenada while he was on vacation there. It appears that this was the 3<sup>rd</sup> 'killing' while individuals were in police custody - during a 3 month period. I wrote to Bishop Darius but received no reply. I spoke to Archbishop Harris about it and he informed me that Bishop Darius was ill and about to leave for the USA for treatment. The persons who visited CCSJ's Office flew to Grenada to protest. UPDATE: The policemen involved have been charged with manslaughter and are out on bail.
4. At my meeting on 3 Jan, 2012 with Archbishop Harris,
  - a. he stated that he was **expanding CCSJ's staffing**. He asked me to meet with one Mrs Jackie Padmore whom he would like to join our team to work on counselling and giving guidance to socially displaced persons/people in need. I met with her on Thurs 5 Jan. She will complete her PhD in May 2012 and will then be able to join us. Agreed with me that we should pilot a programme in one or two parishes and seek to roll it out to other parishes once it is developed. She will work with Sr Christine to implement an appropriate plan of action.

His Grace expressed concern that those who come to Archbishop's House receive adequate guidance and counselling. Our records at the Office show that in 2011 there were 16 persons in need to whom we gave money. Where necessary we referred people to SVP, LWC etc.

- b. He asked me to get a list of **individuals on death row** and to arrange for people to pray for them. I am still awaiting information. Officer Joel, to whom Fr Christo (Prison Chaplain) had spoken about our request, has informed me that there has been a change in policy and that this

information is no longer shared with the public. I have now written to Mr Martin Martinez, the Commissioner of Prisons, for this information.

5. CCSJ supported **Vocations Week** (8-15 Jan, 2012), by focusing on this issue in our Catholic News column and by sending a card to priests, deacons and religious sisters to affirm them and thank them for saying: “Yes” to the call to their vocation.
6. On 10 Jan I met with Gitlin and Shirley (HR Dept.) to prepare a draft **videotape** on **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**. As you know, Gitlin had agreed to help us produce 5 minute ‘fillers’ which TCN will use to promote social justice. The plan was for us to draw on the support of those who had successfully completed the SJ online course. Sadly, one of TCN’s main editors has had an accident and will be off work for a few months. In spite of this, Gitlin is prepared to tape the sessions on her own. Shirley and I did a ‘dry run’ and we now have a DVD on this theme. We will continue to pursue this area of our work. Once we tape a few sessions, we will send DVDs to parishes as part of our education programme.
7. Since Gitlin did not think that it was appropriate to use the photos of our Churches (taken last year for our **Sacred Spaces** initiative), she and I have agreed that we will seek to use the photos to prepare a DVD on the Divine Mercy with reflections on social justice. She will build this into her work schedule.
8. Our **January Newsletter** focuses on the Pope’s 2012 World Day of Peace Message: Educating Young People in Justice and Peace. This will also be the focus of Ask Why on Tues 24 Jan.
9. I was interviewed on C TV via telephone - for half an hour - on Tues 17 Jan about **CCSJ’s Media Release** calling for action to curb child abuse in TT. Our media release was reported on also in Catholic News (Sun 22 Jan), in the Newsday and on a few radio stations. The Editorial in Catholic News (22 Jan), focused on our media release also.
10. CCSJ’s contribution to the revised **RE Book**, was acknowledged at the launch of the RE book on Thurs 19 Jan. The content of CCSJ’s **Values and Virtues Formation Programme** booklet was incorporated in the revised RE workbook and credit was given in the book for CCSJ’s work with the principal and teachers who had assisted us in producing our workbook. The programme

will now begin as students enter 5<sup>th</sup> Standard and not after they sit SEA. This will allow for more time to focus on relevant issues. Sr Christine represented CCSJ at the launch of the RE Team's revised workbook – on Thurs 19 Jan.

11. On Sat 21 Jan, I met with Andrea Joseph-Hutchinson, Gitlin Aleong (TCN) and a group of **youths** at Bourg Mulatresse parish, to tape the youths perform some **skits** which focused on social justice issues. They had performed these skits at a Seminar at which I was a speaker at the end of Respect for Life Week in 2011. TCN will use the tape as a 'filler' on Ask Why on 24 Jan and on other occasions.
12. On Sunday 22 Jan, I was a speaker at Family Life Commission's **Convention** for those in our Archdiocese who are **Separated, Divorced and Widowed**. The theme was: What has God got to do with me now? My presentation has been uploaded on our website for information.
13. From Fri 27 to Sun 29 Jan, members of the **Synod Implementation Team** will be meeting with Archbishop Harris in Icacos on a **retreat** to plan ahead for our Archdiocese.
14. **Sr Christine** and I met in January to plan her **work schedule**. She will report on this.
15. On Wed 25 I will be attending an Education Stakeholders meeting at Crowne Plaza with the Minister of Education, Hon Tim Gopeesingh to discuss issues relating to education in TT. This will give me an opportunity to raise social justice issues.

LEELA RAMDEEN, 25 JAN 2012

#### **CHAIR'S REPORT: FROM THURS 17 JANUARY 2013 – WED 24 APRIL 2013**

1. On Sat 19 January 2013, CCSJ held a Workshop for members of the Business Community - at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, San Fernando. It was organised by CCSJ in collaboration with Msgr Christian Pereira, Parish Priest at OLPH and his Team. Fr Clyde Harvey and Fr Matthew D'Hereaux and Msgr Christian were the speakers who addressed issues relating to Cardinal Peter Turkson's (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace) *Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection*.

About 60 persons attended the Workshop and they participated well in the proceedings. On behalf of members of CCSJ, I wrote thanking Msgr Christian, his team and our speakers. This was the second of our Workshops on Cardinal Turkson's guidelines on business ethics. The first Workshop, as you will recall, was held at Assumption, Maraval in 2012.

Thanks also to Richard and Jo Anne who recruited persons to attend and who attended the Workshop themselves.

2. On Thurs 24 Jan, members of the VIRTUS Archdiocese's Team met with Msgr Llanos, who has overall responsibility for the Programme – aimed at protecting God's children from child sexual abuse. The challenge for us still is to adopt a Safe Environment Policy and develop/adapt a Model Code of Pastoral Conduct. VIRTUS has produced a model that can be adapted to suit our local situation. Mike James has told me that the AEC Bishops have prepared a Draft Code of Pastoral Conduct which they would have discussed at their recent meeting in Guadeloupe. If it is adopted, it will provide a framework for us in our Archdiocese.

A session was held at Archbishop's House on 15 Feb to train a few more facilitators so that we can 'roll out' training at a faster pace. 3 of the 10 persons invited attended the session and are committed to working as Facilitators. You will recall that Dr Dexter and Mrs Frieda Shim are the Co-ordinators and I am a Facilitator.

From 22-24 May I shall be in Guyana attending 2 meetings - 1 for Coordinators and Facilitators of VIRTUS, and the second meeting will be held with Chairs of all Justice and Peace Commissions in the region. The AEC will be meeting all costs.

3. On Sat 26 January, I attended a Workshop organised by the organisation: Women Working for Social Progress. It was held at Crown Plaza – now Capital Plaza. The aim was to consider issues affecting young men and women in TT. Representatives from Single Fathers Association of TT were also present and made a plea for women to support the group. SFATT is an advocacy group that aims "to raise national awareness in an attempt to put an end to the injustice meted out to children who have been forcibly estranged from their fathers." It was founded by businessman, Rhondall Feeles who says:

*"We believe that if the court systems were more on a level playing field and women stood just as great a chance as men of losing custody of their kids both parties would put aside their past personal issues and focus on the child's happiness...The court has now become a house of revenge for relationships gone sour. The time for this to end is now and fathers and mothers need to begin cooperating for the sakes of our children."* (see: [www.sfatt.org](http://www.sfatt.org) ).

The group had written to me asking for support and I wrote an article in Catholic News highlighting its work and calling for the Faithful to work to create a culture in which families could thrive.



4. On Mon 28 January, I was invited to be a guest on Heritage Radio (101.7) with Hans Hanoomansingh to talk about CCSJ's Media Release on Modesty in Carnival. Since the time allocated was from 6:15 am to 8:00 am, I had an opportunity to talk about a number of social justice issues.
5. On Tues 29 January, Nadine, Msgr Llanos and I shared with viewers of Ask Why, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's (then Pope Benedict XVI) Peace Message, entitled: Blessed are the Peacemakers. CCSJ's Newsletter carried the entire message and was circulated widely.
6. On 30 January I attended a meeting of the Synod Implementation Team (SIT) at which issues relating to developments in the Archdiocese and progress regarding the implementation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pastoral Priority - *Revitalising Catholic Culture and Identity: My Church, My Parish, My Family*, were discussed.

I wish to remind you that the booklet produced by Sr Juliet Rajah, who takes the lead on this Pastoral Priority, is available on CCSJ's Website. It is well worth reading. It is a helpful guide – particularly during this Year of Faith.

The reduction in the number of Vicariate Link Coordinators in active service was noted at the SIT meeting.

7. On 30 January, since I had to attend SIT meeting, Clive, as CCSJ's Deputy, represented us at a meeting of a Committee on which I now sit. His Grace had asked Msgr Llanos to attend a meeting of the group of leaders from the Christian, Hindu and Muslim faiths and to sign on the Church's behalf a "Declaration of Commitment and Call to Action." As reported in Catholic News, "The Catholic Church was among more than two dozen religious groups which recently signed a Declaration of Commitment in support of the HIV/AIDS response in Trinidad and Tobago. The signing took place on December 10, 2012..."

"Msgr Llanos, also the Vicar for Family Life, told the *Catholic News* that the focus would be on action, noting that the Declaration has been approved by Archbishop Joseph Harris. He explained that Leela Ramdeen, chair of the Catholic Commission for Social Justice, would represent the Church on the coordinating committee, which was chaired by Anglican priest, Reverend Shelly Ann Tenia."

I have been appointed to the Board of the Committee that has been formed and am responsible for preparing the By-Laws which I have completed and which have been circulated for comments. Since the signing of the Declaration, the resulting Committee has decided to enlarge the focus and to embrace all issues relating to health and family life in TT. The Vision and Mission are being developed.

The proposed name of the Group is: “*Faith Based Organisation for National Action*” (FBONA). The last meeting of the Group was on Monday 15 April. I attended the meeting at which Br Noble Khan, a member of the IRO, and Br Bramdeo Maharaj, also a member of the IRO, shared with the Group the Strategic Plan of the IRO (2010-2015) which has been developed with the support of Arthur Lok Jack School of Business. I have asked that the Vision and Mission as outlined in that document be circulated to all members of FBONA as we should not be duplicating the goals of the IRO.

8. On Friday 1 February, I joined Msgr Llanos, members of the CEBM, including its Chair and CEO, and representatives from the Ministry of Health involved in the Human Papilloma Virus Vaccine in Primary Schools, at a meeting at Archbishop’s House to discuss the concerns of the Catholic Church/CEBM, about the Vaccine.

Dr Krishna Kumar Sundaraneedi, Medical Director, Health Programmes and Technical Support Services, led the Ministry’s team which included Dr Sherene Kalloo, Obstetrician/Gynaecologist, and Dr Yitades Gebre of Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) .

See the following link to a Paper I prepared on the issues involved:  
<http://rcsocialjusticett.org/2.0/>

### **Concerns about administering HPV Vaccine in TT Schools**

It was eventually agreed that the Church will allow the HPV vaccination programme into its schools if the Ministry of Health fulfils certain conditions:

The Ministry of Health must provide full disclosure about the vaccine to enable parents to make an informed decision. Details must include the virus strains that are not covered by the vaccine, the period for which the vaccine is effective, contraindications, and the full range of possible side effects. Further, a programme of systematic monitoring must be introduced to monitor students after they receive the vaccine.

As Catholic News reported in its issue on 10 Feb 2013, “At the same time, the Church is reminding young people of the best protection against HPV infection and other viruses: postpone sexual activity until married.”

On Ash Wednesday, 13 February, at the request of His Grace, Dr Roland Baptiste, CEBM’s Chairman, and I appeared on CNC3 to be interviewed by Hema Ramkissoon about the Church’s concerns and the conditions set.

On 18 April I received a copy of an e-mail written to the Chairman of CEBM by Mrs Sharon Mangroo, CEBM's CEO, stating that even though the Ministry representatives undertook to meet certain conditions before entering Catholic schools, some Principals in our schools had received letters attempting to re-start the HPV Vaccine programme in schools before the conditions had been met. Action is being taken to ensure that a letter from His Grace is sent to the Minister regarding this issue.

9. I was invited by Fr Bob Johnston (Society of the Divine Word – SVD) to run a 2-day Workshop on the Social Doctrine of the Church in the Diocese of Willemstad, St Maarten (Dutch side) on 12 and 13 April. About 50 persons, mainly Catechists, participated in the Workshop which went well. That Diocese met all costs related to my trip there.
10. On Mon 15 April Clive and I met with Mrs Edna Sabga and Mr Temprom at Skipper's Restaurant to discuss issues relating to CCSJ's Annual Fundraising Dinner which will take place at that Restaurant on Sat 8 June from 7:30 p.m. Tickets have been printed and members are asked to try and sell some and to support this initiative by purchasing ticket(s) also. Profits will go towards the maintenance of the Anthony Pantin Reintegration Centre which is run by SVP. The cost of each ticket is \$450 TT. Mrs Sabga has agreed to reduce the cost of each meal to \$150 TT, on the basis that CCSJ will source the chicken and baby pork ribs which she will cook. This will give us a bigger profit margin this year. I have written to the Commodore at the TT Yacht Club seeking a waiver for the rental fee to use the premises on the night of 8 June and for our visitors to park at the facility. Plans are in train to secure wine for those attending the dinner – 1<sup>st</sup> glass will be free. Thereafter, drinks can be purchased from the cash bar. Efforts will be made to get some hampers to be used as door prizes.
11. In CCSJ's Pastoral Plan for 2013, we stated that we would organise Seminars and Workshops relating to the Year of Faith. I have asked Richard to assist by working with any of the other VLCs available to identify parishes that would be interested in organising Workshops on any of the Parables in the Bible. It would be helpful if each of you could approach your parish priest and ask if he would be willing to host such a Workshop on any of the Parables. The aim is to link the Parables to our mandate to love God and our neighbour. CCSJ will be prepared to share/meet the cost of refreshments, if necessary.
12. Since the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth) was observed on 11 April, 2013, I have obtained a commitment from Fr Matthew D'Hereaux to share his thoughts on this encyclical by Blessed John XXIII. A Seminar is being planned to take place at his parish, Our Lady of Mt Carmel, on Sat 1 June. A time is to be agreed with Fr Matthew.

We will tape the session and produce a DVD that will be distributed to all Vicariates for use in their parishes.

13. I sent information to the Social Justice group, led by Dr Rose Osuji, in the parish of St. Joseph/Mt.D'or Group to support their activities on Monday 22, April to observe International Mother Earth Day. I sent them the link to CCSJ's : *Draft framework towards an Environmental Policy for the Archdiocese of Port of Spain* - see link to the documents on CCSJ's website:  
<http://rcsocialjusticett.org/2.0/special-focus/environment/>

**[ENVIRONMENT: Archdiocesan Policy |](#)**

14. CCSJ's Ask Why TV programme – Tues 23 April – see Agenda item.
15. On Wed 24 April I will join Msgr Llanos at a Stakeholders' Consultation meeting which is being organised by the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development at Capital Plaza. Since members of the IRO had made it clear that they had not all been consulted on the Draft Policy on Gender and Development, and since the Draft document is currently before Parliament, that Ministry has invited a representative from each faith community represented on the IRO, to attend the meeting on 24 April to share concerns and recommendations in relation to the Gender Policy – which, in fact, has not been circulated for consultation!
16. I was asked to forward to Mike James, AEC Secretariat, certain documents/articles written by me on the Draft Policy on Gender and Development which may have been useful to the Bishops at their recent meeting in Guadaloupe. Also included in the documentation was a copy of my report on the Conference held in Jamaica.

To mark International Human Rights Day, the Jamaica Coalition for a Healthy Society in association with the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship hosted a series of events between December 8 and December 10, 2012. The major event was the International Conference on December 8 at the Jamaica Conference Centre, Kingston. In addition to the Conference there was an event entitled "Celebrating God – the Giver of Rights" which was staged at Emancipation Park on Human Rights Day, Monday, December 10. My report on the Conference can be accessed via the following link on our website:

**["Human Rights, International Law and the Family" :](http://rcsocialjusticett.org/2.0/)**  
<http://rcsocialjusticett.org/2.0/>

At the end of the Conference participants were invited to sign *The Kingston Declaration*, a formal statement outlining the Judeo-Christian ideals for marriage and the natural family, which serves as the basis for a healthy society.

- 17 I have accepted an invitation to attend the 5<sup>th</sup> World Congress against the Death Penalty which will be held in Madrid from 12 to 15 June 2013. WCADP have agreed to pay my air fare and accommodation. The focus for next year will be on the Caribbean.