

THE CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE (CCSJ)

Work completed/in progress since 24 June 2011 (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.

1. CCSJ organized 2 **Proposal Writing Workshops** to access European Union Funds for Poverty Reduction projects. One workshop was held in Tunapuna on 8 October 2011 and the second in La Romaine in November. Gary Tagallie facilitated both. He has agreed to tape a session at TCN so that we could circulate the information on DVD to parishes for their use. Gary works with the Ministry of Social Development and is in charge of disbursing European Union Funds for Poverty Reduction in TT. He has been saying for a while that Catholics/parishes are not applying for funds. Our aim is to educate the faithful about the funds that are available and to develop their skills so that they could complete the relevant application forms.

2. VIRTUS: Protecting God's Children: CCSJ is a member of the Archdiocesan Committee responsible for organizing VIRTUS Training in our Archdiocese to protect our children from sexual abuse. Dr Dexter and Mrs Frieda Shim, Family Life Commission (FLC), are the Archdiocesan Coordinators/facilitators. I am a facilitator also. The AEC Bishops are committed to implement this programme. Mahalia Paul, Dominica, is the regional Coordinator. Overall responsibility for the programme in TT falls within the remit of FLC. To date training workshops have been held for members of the clergy and for Heads of Department and members of Religious Congregations – half-day sessions at Our Lady of Fatima RC Church Hall from 9 am to 12 noon. The last sessions were held on 15 and 22 November 2011. Other groups to be trained include: Catechists & RE Teams, Principals of all Catholic Schools (Principals of privately run Catholic Schools will also be invited to attend), Staff working in all Catholic Schools: teachers, ancilliary staff, security staff, Managers and staff working in Catholic residential homes and in other private Catholic institutions, Volunteers, Ecclesial Communities and Prayer Groups. We also intend to develop a train the trainer programme to train parents, including members of PTAs and students.

3. All planned activities for **Respect For Life Week** (RFLW: 12-19 Nov 2011) were implemented. Collaboration between Departments during RFLW was excellent. Sr Juliet (Catechetical Team) and Sr Jean (Liturgical Team) prepared the Prayer Supplement which was printed in Catholic News on 13 November (at the beginning of RFLW). The Youth Commission printed banners which were displayed in various parishes around the country promoting RFLW. Tricia Syms from Family Life Commission was a panellist on CCSJ's Ask Why TV programme on the theme. The Poster, Prayer Card and Newsletter which CCSJ distributed were appreciated by many. Our Essay Competition on the theme: **Improving Respect for life in Trinidad and Tobago was won by Gerard and Jon-Raphael Sealy** (Under 14 years), and **Ottrisha Carter** (14-19 years). The essays of the winners of our Essay Competition are available on our Website. Reports of some initiatives taken by some parishes and schools have been reported in Catholic News. The **Calendar of Events** for the week included:

Sat. Nov. 12: *Sir Ellis Clarke Memorial Conference.* Theme: **The relevance of the document, Justice in the World, today.** Speakers were: Archbishop Edward Gilbert C.Ss.R., Mr. Victor Scheffers, President of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Netherlands, and Executive Member of Justitia et Pax, Europe, and Br. Emrol Gould, President of the Inter Religious Organisation (IRO) and Head of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints . I was the Moderator.

Sun. Nov. 13: *Inter Faith Service* at St Benedict's RC Church, La Romaine. Theme: **Respect Life: Promote Justice.**

Mon. Nov.14: *Prayer Session* organised by Eternal Light Community, St Charles RC Church, Tunapuna.

Tues. Nov. 15: CCSJ's *Ask Why* TV programme on TCN. Theme: **Why should we respect life?** Panellists were: Fr Martin Sirju, Sr Christine Walcott OP, Tricia Syms and Deacon Mike James. I was the Moderator

Wed. Nov. 16: *Panel Discussion* to observe the UN's International Year for People of African Descent – Our Lady of Fatima Church hall. Theme: **Respect Life: Respecting the contribution of People of African Descent in our multi-ethnic society.** Panellists were : Dr Rita Pemberton, Senior Lecturer, former Head of the Department of History, and Deputy Dean, Student Affairs in the Faculty of Humanities and Education at UWI; and Rubadiri Victor, President of the Artist Coalition of T&T. I was the Moderator.

Thurs. Nov. 17: Parishes, schools etc were encouraged to plan their own activities.

Fri. Nov. 18: *Vigil for Life:* Emmanuel Community.

Sat. Nov. 19: *Holy Hour.* Parish priests were asked to encourage youths to take the lead in parishes before Mass.

Sun. Nov. 20: *Seminar* at parish of Our Lady Queen of the Universe, Bourg Mulatresse. Fr Arnold Francis and I were the speakers. The session was organized by Andrea Joseph-Huthinson – one of the graduates of CCSJ's social justice online course. We focused on the theme: **Promoting Respect For Life.** Some of the Youths in the Parish performed skits highlighting certain injustices in society. CCSJ arranged for the skits to be taped and these were aired on TCN.

NB: RESPECT FOR LIFE WEEK IN 2012 IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE FROM – SAT 6 – SAT 13 OCTOBER, 2012

4. Resource Production:

- CCSJ's Newsletters: Since June 2011, CCSJ has issued 4 Newsletters:

1. July 2011: sharing good practice in parishes across the Archdiocese.
2. Sept. 2011: extracts from the Synod of Bishops 1971 Document entitled: *Justice in the World.*
3. Jan 2012: Pope Benedict XVI's Jan 1 Peace Message: *Educating Young People in Justice and Peace.*

4. February 2012: Pope's Lenten Message: "We Must Not Remain Silent Before Evil". These Newsletters are printed for us free of charge. They are circulated to parishes, schools, and other Departments and have been uploaded on CCSJ's website.

- Further copies of CCSJ's Take-a-Bite series of DVDs on various social justice themes are available to parishes free of charge as are our
- Nine Leaflets focusing on various social justice themes.
- CCSJ's 2012 Calendar is used as a teaching tool to raise awareness of social justice issues. It highlights the links between Catholic Culture and Identity and Social Justice. It has been widely circulated – to parishes, schools, other Departments.
- CCSJ is working with graduates of the Social Justice online course with CREDI and University of Dayton to produce bite-sized video clips for use as fillers on TCN.
- The Rosary and Social Justice Project: Last year CCSJ arranged to visit and take photos – outside and inside – of all Catholic Churches and a few 'outposts'. We hope to use these photos to produce a DVD for parishes – as an educational tool. The DVD will show the pictures of our Churches as the Divine Mercy Rosary is being said - with social justice prayers/reflections.

5. CCSJ continues to update our website in order to attract visitors and educate them about justice issues. Raymond Syms does an excellent job as our Webmaster.

6. **Media releases and links with the media:** Since June 2011, CCSJ has issued 11 media releases on various topics (see website). Some media houses invite CCSJ to appear on TV and/or radio to discuss issues raised in our releases. It is one way of educating the public/faithful about justice issues and to motivate them to act justly.

CCSJ is often contacted by the print and electronic media for comments on topical issues and we always respond in line with the teachings of our Church e.g. over the past year I have been a guest on radio and TV to speak about issues relating to the Death Penalty, Abortion, Education, Poverty alleviation in TT, and Crime and violence in TT. This is one way of showing that there is a visible, credible sign that Catholics are playing our part to transform society and to promote justice and peace.

7. **Social justice online course with the University of Dayton and CREDI:** Since 2009, 10 persons have successfully completed the course. 5 persons are currently on the 2011/2012 course. Over time we hope to train persons who will be able to initiate work in their parishes. This will support our own work as we will be able to draw on their expertise e.g.

- in 2011, 2 of the graduates from Santa Rosa parish ran a six weeks Computer Course for senior citizens to honour the United Nations International Day for Older Persons. On the opening day there were approximately thirty participants.
- 2 members of the Archdiocese's HR Department and six of those persons who completed the 2009/10 social justice online course, have agreed to work with me to produce, with the assistance

of TCN, 5 minute TV programmes on various aspects of social justice, for distribution on DVDs to parishes and for use on TCN as **'fillers'**. The aim is to ensure that the DVDs are viewer-friendly; could be used as an educational tool – sharing the social teaching of the Church, and containing practical examples of what one can do to promote social justice.

8. **CCSJ's Ask Why TV Programmes** are available on DVDs and are advertised in our Newsletters and on our Website as resources to support social justice work in parishes. During 2011, we addressed the following topics.

9. As you know, **The Mary Care Centre (MCC)**, which was founded by the late Archbishop Anthony Pantin in September 1980, was re-dedicated in October 2010. MCC provides a sanctuary for pregnant young women between the ages of (12) twelve years and (17) seventeen years; where their spiritual, physical and psychological needs are nurtured towards self-development and growth.

The Centre falls within the remit of CCSJ but is run on a day to day basis by Eternal Light Community (ELC). Deborah De Rosia is the Chairperson of the Centre's Board of Management and is responsible for submitting a quarterly report to "The Board" (Bernadette Patrick and me). ELC is responsible for raising funds to run the Centre. The Archdiocese grants the sum of \$5,000 per month to support the running of the Centre.

Deborah said in her recent report that "Since the re-opening of the Centre Fourteen (14) young women have come through its doors and spent an average of seven (7) months. They were inculcated with spiritual values while their physical needs were met. We were blessed with twelve (12) babies up to the present time. Most of the young women admitted to the Centre came from rural areas. Many also came as referrals from the General Hospital, Magistracy and other similar institutions."

10. **Values and Virtues Formation Programme in RC Primary Schools:** As you may know, this Programme has now been incorporated in the RE Curriculum (2012) in our RC Primary Schools. In consultation with me, Sr Juliet and Sr Columba drew on the content of CCSJ's Workbook and have re-printed the RC Workbooks incorporating aspects of the Values and Virtues Workbook - for all ages in the Primary School sector and not only for post-SEA students, as was the case until 2011.

11. **CCSJ's Parish Link Coordinator (PLC), Vicariate Link Coordinators (VLC) and social justice work:** Sr Christine Walcott O.P. took up her duties as CCSJ's new PLC on 1 Sept. 2011. The Job Description of each VLC contains a commitment to promote social justice in their respective Vicariates. Richard Smith, a VLC, coordinates the work of the VLCs in relation to social justice issues and reports to CCSJ at our monthly meetings. Sr Christine Walcott O.P. liaises with the VLCs and with other Archdiocesan Departments to promote CCSJ's goals. This entire area of work is still to be developed. The VLCs work to Msgr Llanos and report to me (CCSJ) in relation to the social justice aspect of their job description.

12. **CCSJ's Wellness Project – re Diabetes prevention and management:** Sadly, not many parishes are taking up the offer to listen to Dr Kenwyn Nicholls' excellent power-point presentation on this issue. Dr Nicholls returned to TT after practising as a Doctor in the USA for

many years. He has offered his services free of charge to us and we have run sessions in 2 parishes to date – Assumption and Santa Rosa RC Church. There are more than 143,000 persons in TT with Type 2 Diabetes and more than 103,000 who are Pre-Diabetic. Dr Nicholls says that TT has the highest number of amputees in the region – for persons with Diabetes. We have asked the Vicariate Coordinators to assist us in arranging sessions in parishes to raise awareness of this issue.

13. Maintaining a balance between social action work (working to effect systemic change) and works of mercy/charity: This is a real challenge for CCSJ. Unless we can mobilize/motivate the faithful at parish level to walk with the 2 feet of Christian mercy, we will not achieve our goals. It is hoped that the VLCs and the PLC will be able to establish parish groups/work with groups that already exist to practise Jesus’ commandment to love God and one another. In “Faithful citizenship: Civic Responsibility for a new millennium”, the U.S. Catholic Bishops said:

“Jesus called us to love our neighbours by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and afflicted, and comforting the victims of injustice (Mt 25:31-46). Our Lord’s example and words demand a life of charity from each of us. Yet they also require action on a broader scale in defence of life, in pursuit of peace, in support of the common good, and in opposition to poverty, hunger, and injustice. Such action involves the institutions and structures of society, economy, and politics.”

Social ministry, in the Catholic tradition, is a "both/and" proposition. While we meet immediate needs today, we work for long-term changes that will create a more just tomorrow – for all.

14. SOME EXAMPLES OF COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS

a. **Lecture series at Hugh Wooding Law School:** From Oct 12, 2011 CCSJ ran a lunchtime lecture series for Catholic students at Hugh Wooding Law School. The focus was on Catholic Social Teaching. The sessions were facilitated by Anne Marie Richardson (one of the graduates of the Social Justice online course) and Sr. Christine Walcott O.P. (CCSJ’s Parish Link Coordinator).

b. See CCSJ’s website: Speeches and Presentations for paper I presented at the **Accreditation Council’s Panel Discussion** at UWI on *The role of the State in Higher Education*.

c. I attended *The First International Conference on The Death Penalty in the Great Caribbean* held in Madrid from 17 – 19 October, 2011 and organized by The Community of Sant’Egidio in collaboration with other organizations (paid for by the Spanish Govt.). I was one of the Discussants. A Media Release on the proceedings is available at: <http://www.nodeathpenalty.santegidiomadrid.org/> Gregory Delzin, TT Attorney-at-Law, and long-time advocate against the death penalty also participated in the Conference.

d. CCSJ was involved in **Amnesty International’s Workshop** on the Death Penalty - held at Normandie Hotel on Sat 10 Dec. CCSJ added our name to the Statement that emanated from the Workshop.

- e. In 2011 I participated in an event organized by the Ministry of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs and the NGO – Women’s Institute for Alternative Development to discuss issues arising from a documentary prepared by the 2 groups on the theme: ***Women, Peace and Security in TT.***
- f. In June I represented CCSJ at a Civil Society Consultation in relation to the ***Universal Periodic Review (UPR)*** - organised by the Attorney General prior to TT’s submission of our UPR report. We submitted a written report which is available on our Website.
- g. **having presented a paper at the UNAIDS Consultation at the Hyatt, TT, entitled *Universal Access to HIV Treatment, Prevention, Care and Support, on Wed 23 and Thurs 24 March, 2011***, I was invited **to participate in a further** Regional Consultation on ***Positive Health, Dignity and Prevention in the Caribbean, in DR on 21 and 22 June. They met all costs.*** Those gathered discussed a new Policy Framework that has been developed by the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+) and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). As was expected, the Catholic perspective I shared was at variance with the views expressed by most of those present at the DR Consultation – particularly in relation to the Catholic Church’s position on the use of condoms, same sex unions, homosexuality etc. I stated the Church’s position/teaching on these issues.
- h. **UNECLAC Consultation:** I represented CCSJ at 2 Consultation sessions organized by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC). The Consultation focused on the Draft Caribbean Human Development Report on Citizens’ Security. The report, [Human Development and the Shift to Better Citizen Security, was launched at NAPA on Wed 8 Feb.](#)
- i. In Sept. I delivered the feature address to **Catechists of Central and South TT** at their rally on the theme: Forming God’s Caribbean People: A reflection on Revitalizing Catholic Culture and Identity.
- j. In Sept. Sr Christine represented CCSJ at the **IRO’s 2-day Workshop.**
- k. In Sept. I was one of the speakers at **CREDI’s Symposium** at UTT on the theme: The Vocation of Teaching in the 21st Century: the sacred responsibility to form children.
- l. In Sept. I participated in a discussion held at the Arthur Lok Jack School of Business – focusing on **The World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report 2011 and the implications for TT.**
- m. On Jan 22 I presented a paper at the Family Life Commission’s Convention on the theme: **Separated, Divorced, Widowed: What has God got to do with me now?**

n. **Trinidad and Tobago Reintegration Foundation: (TTRF/APRC):** CCSJ continues to work with the Society of St Vincent de Paul in the implementation of plans to rehabilitate former prisoners. This was a CCSJ project which SVP had agreed to 'take over'. The land, which is owned by CCSJ in San Raphael, is being transferred to the Archdiocese and will be let to SVP at a peppercorn rent to run the facility. Phase 1 of the Project is complete and there are currently 6 former prisoners at the facility. Clive Belgrave, SVP lead officer on the project, is also CCSJ's Vice-Chair.

**NB: CCSJ'S ONLY MAJOR NATIONAL EVENT
PLANNED FOR 2012 WILL BE RESPECT FOR LIFE
WEEK – SAT 6 – SAT 13 OCTOBER, 2012**