

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **CCSJ supports the Government's decision to declare a State of Emergency and limited curfew in TT**

The Catholic Commission for Social Justice (CCSJ) supports the Government's decision to declare a State of Emergency and limited curfew in TT. The Catholic Church continues to be deeply concerned about the escalation of crime in T&T.

CCSJ calls on all Catholics, and indeed, the entire national community to support the measure by offering up prayers in our families, our parishes/places of worship and our communities. Let us make a new commitment to reduce crime and restore our respect for law and for the dignity of human life.

While recognising the critical role that the Government and law enforcement bodies must play in crime prevention, they alone cannot solve our problems. As Archbishop Gilbert said in 2003: "Everybody has to get involved." Our aim must be to reject a culture of violence and death and embrace a culture of life. Together we can promote crime prevention, restore a sense of community and build the common good.

We appeal to members of the law enforcement agencies to use only appropriate force and to act always in the best interest of citizens.

CCSJ asks that Church activities at night - especially Saturday evening Masses - end at a reasonable time to ensure that everyone reaches home before the 9:00 curfew.

We appeal to all citizens of good will to use this time to bond with your family; to reflect on our values in public and private places; on our lawlessness; on our bad example; and to recommit to living virtuous lives. Let us reflect together on how we live and how we can support each other.

CCSJ is aware that short-term answers to deeper social problems will not work. We call on our Government to develop short term, medium term and long term strategies to deal with crime and violence.

An holistic approach must be multi-sectoral and must include strategies that: address white-collar crime and the dastardly acts of those bringing in drugs and guns into TT; offer support to victims of crime; prioritise rehabilitation programmes for prisoners/ex-prisoners – within a Restorative Justice framework; create conditions that will enable individuals to realise their potential and their human dignity e.g. addressing issues such as poverty, employment, housing, health care, education, environmental degradation etc.; aim to develop a Police Service that demonstrates integrity, professionalism, fairness and compassion; address the deficiencies in the Administration of Justice; nurture participatory governance – drawing on the expertise of citizens.

We draw attention to a 2003 media statement by Archbishop Edward J. Gilbert C.Ss.R and CCSJ, entitled: *Mobilising the entire community to reduce crime*, and to Archbishop Gilbert's Pastoral Letter in December 2003 entitled: *An Archdiocesan Conversation About Crime and Violence*. Both are available on the Media page of CCSJ's website: <http://rcsocialjusticett.org>.

In our 2003 joint statement with Archbishop Gilbert, we highlight 4 areas that require urgent attention if we are to succeed in reducing crime: 1. Strengthening Family Life; 2. Promoting moral and spiritual values and engaging in anti-crime campaigns in the Education sector – at all levels; 3. Empowering communities; and 4. The role of the Media in combatting crime.

We are a people of 'hope'. This propels us to find solutions to the challenges we face. Let's stand in solidarity with each other and work together to build a caring, safe, secure, law-abiding and harmonious society.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT LEELA RAMDEEN, CHAIR, CCSJ, ON 299 8945**