

## SESSION 1: Friday 12 April 2013

7:15 – 8:55 - Leela Ramdeen

### *An introduction to Catholic Social Teaching*

Good evening brothers and sisters. It is indeed an honour to be here with you. Before I share with you some of the key principles underpinning Catholic Social Teaching, I wish to set the tone for the evening by asking you to turn to your neighbour and discuss for 2/3 minutes what it means to be Catholic.

At the end of the discussion, on your own, think carefully and choose **one sentence** that you think defines you as a Catholic. Write the word you have chosen on the piece of paper provided and it will be collected. This is to be done anonymously and will be displayed afterwards.

**Continue at end of exercise:** I gave you this exercise to remind you that unless we define ourselves based on our *Catholic Culture and Identity*, we may be lured by the vagaries of modern society.

The Church's social teaching is still considered as the Church's best kept secret. It is time we share this secret more widely. But before we do so, we ourselves must be aware of the richness contained therein.

Bishop Jason Gordon, Diocese of Bridgetown (Barbados) and Kingstown (SVG)), rightly said some years ago that "Just as the social teaching of the Church is integral to our faith as Catholics, the social justice dimensions of teaching are integral to Catholic faith. They are not fringe, optional, or tangential. They are an essential part of responsibility as disciples. This is not a vocation for a few, but a challenge for every believer"

Archbishop Emeritus Alex Brunett of Seattle reminds us that "Catholic Social Teaching is very much bound up in the message of the Gospel. Much that Christ said had a social dimension, or implication about how we are to treat other people, seek justice, and live justly in society...Catholic Social Teaching is not to be distinguished from other Church teaching and belief; it must be seen as integrated into it.

"We only have to look at the parables to see how Jesus' message is linked to Catholic Social Teaching e.g. the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, separating sheep from goats...Catholic Social teaching is earthshaking...it pertains to the essence of being Catholic. Good, sound social teaching leads to social action. Doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do – is based on our Catholic Social Teaching." He says being familiar with the documents on Catholic Social Teaching is not enough - these must be articulated in action and parish life is where it should happen.

In *Communities of Salt and Light*, 1993, the U.S. Bishops stated: "The central message of the Church's social teaching is simple: our faith is profoundly social. We cannot be called truly

‘Catholic’ unless we hear and heed the Church's call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace.”

And in their 1998 document, *Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice*, they said: “Catholicism does not call us to abandon the world, but to help shape it. This does not mean leaving worldly tasks and responsibilities, but transforming them.”

The Catholic Church has a vision and a mission to assist us in meeting our social obligations. As is stated in Proverbs 29:18: “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

After the 3rd sitting of Synod in our Archdiocese of Port of Spain in 2009, our then Archbishop, Edward Gilbert, adopted the following mission statement for our local Church: “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; and
- Regenerating the Moral and Spiritual Values of our Society.”

These are all inter-related. CCSJ has responsibility for taking a lead in implementing the third Pastoral Priority when it comes into focus. As Archbishop Gilbert has said: “We must begin trying to reclaim the nation. The first step in the reclaiming process is to concentrate on values and recommit to virtuous living...The good people have to work hard together to build a society on values/virtuous living. They must give to the young an experience of living with values and virtues.”

I recall that after Synod, His Grace asked the faithful to send in their names if they wished to volunteer to work in any of the Ministries/Commissions/Departments in the Archdiocese. Many people wrote to offer their time, talent and treasure – in the true spirit of stewardship. However, only a few signed up to support CCSJ. As it turned out, many said that they were not sure about what social justice work entailed. Some were afraid that it would involve “too much politics.”

One of our first tasks is to understand what our Church means by the term: “social justice.” The word "justice" comes from the Latin word jus, which means "right". Justice is one of the 4 Cardinal Virtues – the others are: prudence, temperance/self-control, and fortitude/courage. Justice is often defined as “the perpetual and constant will of rendering to each one his/her rights/due.”

We need to remember that there are various types of justice e.g.

“The Church’s social Magisterium constantly calls for the most classical forms of justice to be respected: **commutative, distributive and legal justice**. Ever greater importance has been given to **social justice**...” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* #201).

Our *Catechism* (# 2411) tells us that **commutative justice** “regulates exchanges between persons and between institutions in accordance with a strict respect for their rights. Commutative justice obliges strictly; it requires safeguarding property rights, paying debts, and fulfilling obligations freely contracted. Without commutative justice, no other form of justice is possible.

“One distinguishes *commutative* justice from **legal justice** which concerns what the citizen owes in fairness to the community, and from **distributive justice** which regulates what the community owes its citizens in proportion to their contributions and needs” (*Catechism* #2411).

**Distributive justice** is “about fairness in what people receive.” It is “the virtue that regulates those actions which involve the rights that an individual may claim from society. According to distributive justice, the state has three basic duties: to distribute the common burdens and privileges equitably; to make it possible for each citizen to exercise natural and acquired rights without undue hindrance; to foster mutual relations among the citizens for living together peacefully. ([www.catholicreference.net](http://www.catholicreference.net)). Distributive justice deals with how the benefits and burdens of society are distributed. Examples – tax burdens, social security benefits etc. Distributive justice is essential to ensure that there is equity e.g. in the allocation of the nation’s resources so that individuals can maintain a basic standard of living.

**Contributive justice:** is about the contribution of each person to build the common good e.g. working, paying taxes, voting. “It is about what people are expected or able, not to get, but to contribute to society” ([filipsagnoli.wordpress.com](http://filipsagnoli.wordpress.com)).

***Restorative justice (RJ) vs Retributive Justice:*** *Retribution should not be used as “vengeance”. A Catholic vision of crime and criminal justice can offer some alternatives to retributive justice (which is currently the state of play in all our islands. A Catholic approach leads us to encourage models of restorative justice that seek to address crime in terms of the harm done to victims and communities, not simply as a violation of law. RJ seeks to heal society, to repair damage done to society by crime.*

As Catholics we believe that the dignity of the human person applies to both victim and offender. As the US Bishops said in their excellent document: “*Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*”: “...crime and the destruction it brings raise fundamental questions about the nature of personal responsibility, community, sin, and redemption... Our Catholic faith can help us and others to go beyond the current debate and gain a deeper understanding of how to reject crime, help heal its victims, and pursue the common good... Catholics believe in responsibility, accountability, and legitimate punishment. Those who harm others or damage property must be held accountable for the hurt they have caused. The community has a right to establish and enforce laws to protect people and to advance the common good.

“At the same time, a Catholic approach does not give up on those who violate these laws. We believe that both victims and offenders are children of God. Despite their very different claims on society, their lives and dignity should be protected and respected. We seek justice, not

vengeance. We believe punishment must have clear purposes: protecting society and rehabilitating those who violate the law.

Thus, while we recognise that the common good is undermined by criminal behavior that threatens the lives and dignity of others, the common good is also undermined by policies that seem to give up on those who have broken the law. We cannot afford to give up on those who have offended; we cannot afford to throw our hands up in the air and say: "What can we do?"

There is much that we can do to restore a sense of community and resist the violence that has engulfed so much of our culture. However, in order to develop new approaches we need to start thinking outside the 'box'.

The 2002 Task Force Report on Prison Reform and Transformation in Trinidad and Tobago summarised RJ as follows:

- Doing justice demands that we work to repair the damage inflicted by the offence and so far as possible restore the victims, offenders and communities.
- Those directly involved and affected by the crime should have the opportunity to participate fully in the restorative justice conference.
- The State's role is to preserve a just social order while the community's role is to maintain a just peace.

To promote integral human development and build the civilisation of love, we must move away from our current retributive model. RJ is not a soft option. *Inter alia*, "it addresses the experiences and needs of the victim, offender, and the community. It encourages offenders to understand the real human consequences of their actions. It places the responsibility for the crime squarely on those who commit the offence."

RJ must be part of an holistic approach to crime reduction and the promotion of social justice. It must be linked to attempts to: address the social ills that plague our society such as poverty and social exclusion; strengthen family life; beef up violence prevention /conflict management programmes in schools; increase the number of guidance officers, social workers, and counsellors in secondary schools; address structural and institutional injustices; create conditions that will allow each person to realise his/her potential; complete the restructuring and reformation of our prison system; and address the deficiencies in the administration of justice in our countries.

The words of UK MP, Paul Goggins are instructive: "I don't want Restorative Justice to simply be reserved for serious offenders. I also want to see this approach become firmly embedded in the everyday life of local communities. It can guide the way that schools develop effective discipline and anti-bullying strategies. It can help deal with low level anti-social behaviour as well as provide a way of mediating between neighbours who can't get on - and don't have a clue

about how to start putting things right. Restorative Justice should be a way of restoring balance to relationships and situations where conflict and fear may otherwise reign.”

Read Blessed John Paul II’s encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)*, 1995, to understand these issues more fully. (Elaborate on issues relating to Capital Punishment as outlined in this encyclical.

**Social Justice:** Read the following paragraphs in our Catechism to understand what our Church means by “justice” and “social justice”: - paragraphs 1807 and 1928-1935:

“1807 **Justice** is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbour. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbour...

1928 Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority.

## I. RESPECT FOR THE HUMAN PERSON

1929 **Social justice** can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of man. The person represents the ultimate end of society, which is ordered to him:

What is at stake is the dignity of the human person, whose defense and promotion have been entrusted to us by the Creator, and to whom the men and women at every moment of history are strictly and responsibly in debt.

1930 Respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from his dignity as a creature. These rights are prior to society and must be recognized by it. They are the basis of the moral legitimacy of every authority: by flouting them, or refusing to recognize them in its positive legislation, a society undermines its own moral legitimacy. If it does not respect them, authority can rely only on force or violence to obtain obedience from its subjects. It is the Church's role to remind men of good will of these rights and to distinguish them from unwarranted or false claims.

1931 Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that "everyone should look upon his neighbor (without any exception) as 'another self,' above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity." No legislation could by itself do away with the fears, prejudices, and attitudes of pride and selfishness which obstruct the establishment of truly fraternal societies. Such behavior will cease only through the charity that finds in every man a "neighbor," a brother.

1932 The duty of making oneself a neighbor to others and actively serving them becomes even more urgent when it involves the disadvantaged, in whatever area this may be. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

1933 This same duty extends to those who think or act differently from us. The teaching of Christ goes so far as to require the forgiveness of offenses. He extends the commandment of love, which is that of the New Law, to all enemies. Liberation in the spirit of the Gospel is incompatible with hatred of one's enemy as a person, but not with hatred of the evil that he does as an enemy.

## II. EQUALITY AND DIFFERENCES AMONG MEN

1934 Created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls, all men have the same nature and the same origin. Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy an equal dignity.

1935 The equality of men rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it:

Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language, or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design."

Also see paragraphs 201-203 in the Compendium on the Social Doctrine of the Church:

**“201. *Justice*** is a value that accompanies the exercise of the corresponding cardinal moral virtue. According to its most classic formulation, it “consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbour”. From a subjective point of view, justice is translated into behaviour that is *based on the will to recognize the other as a person*, while, from an objective point of view, it constitutes *the decisive criteria of morality in the intersubjective and social sphere*.

The Church's social Magisterium constantly calls for the most classical forms of justice to be respected: *commutative, distributive and legal justice*. Ever greater importance has been given to *social justice*, which represents a real development in *general justice*, the justice that regulates social relationships according to the criterion of observance of the *law*. *Social justice*, a requirement related to the *social question* which today is worldwide in scope, concerns the social, political and economic aspects and, above all, the structural dimension of problems and their respective solutions.

**202.** *Justice is particularly important in the present-day context, where the individual value of the person, his dignity and his rights — despite proclaimed intentions — are seriously threatened by the widespread tendency to make exclusive use of criteria of utility and ownership*. Justice too, on the basis of these criteria, is considered in a reductionist manner, whereas it acquires a fuller and more authentic meaning in Christian anthropology. Justice, in fact, is not merely a

simple human convention, because what is “just” is not first determined by the law but by the profound identity of the human being.

**203.** *The full truth about man makes it possible to move beyond a contractualistic vision of justice, which is a reductionist vision, and to open up also for justice the new horizon of solidarity and love. “By itself, justice is not enough. Indeed, it can even betray itself, unless it is open to that deeper power which is love”. In fact, the Church's social doctrine places alongside the value of justice that of solidarity, in that it is the privileged way of peace. If peace is the fruit of justice, “today one could say, with the same exactness and the same power of biblical inspiration (cf. Is 32:17; Jas 3:18): Opus solidaritatis pax, peace as the fruit of solidarity”. The goal of peace, in fact, “will certainly be achieved through the putting into effect of social and international justice, but also through the practice of the virtues which favour togetherness, and which teach us to live in unity, so as to build in unity, by giving and receiving, a new society and a better world”.*

The writer, Thomas Storck, wrote a useful article last year entitled: Social Justice According to Pius XI - Homiletic & Pastoral Review.

[www.hprweb.com/2012/12/social-justice-according-to-pius-xi](http://www.hprweb.com/2012/12/social-justice-according-to-pius-xi)

He said: “The term ‘social justice’, though common enough today, is little understood by most of those who use it... But the term does have a precise meaning. That meaning and the significance of this concept of justice, were carefully explained by Pius XI, the pontiff who introduced it into the corpus of Catholic social teaching. In many respects it is the *key* term and concept of Catholic social teaching. All the other aspects of the Church’s social doctrine—such as the principle of subsidiarity, the just wage or the right to private property—are related to social justice, and rely on the existence of social justice....Pope Pius, who reigned from 1922 to 1939, introduced the term (social justice) into Catholic teaching in his encyclical, *Studiorum Ducem* (1923) (On St Thomas Aquinas). He later made extensive use of it in two important social encyclicals: *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) (The 40<sup>th</sup> Year) – written 40 years after Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, and *Divini Redemptoris* (1937) (Divine Redeemer).

\*\*\*When considering “social justice”, it is important to distinguish between charity/works of mercy and works of social action. We will spend some time on this tomorrow.

*In their 1998 document: Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*, the U.S. Bishops stated: “Far too many Catholics are unfamiliar with the basic content of Catholic social teaching. More fundamentally, many Catholics do not adequately understand that the social mission of the Church is an essential part of Catholic faith. This poses a serious challenge for all Catholics, since it weakens our capacity to be a Church that is true to the demands of the Gospel. We need to do more to share the social mission and message of our Church...” The values of the Church's social teaching must not be treated as tangential or optional. They must be a core part of teaching and formation.”

There is much work for us to do. Our societies, indeed, the world, need healing. Healing will come when we all live Gospel values. But after we make First Communion and Confirmation,

what is on offer in our parishes to assist us as we strive to make sense of all that's coming at us in today's troubled world? How do we resist the evils that confront us e.g. moral relativism, selfishness, individualism, the negative aspects of globalization and so on? If we develop our awareness of the social teaching of our Church, we will be better equipped to meet the many challenges of our modern world. We constantly need to remind ourselves of what we must believe and how we must live our lives as Catholics.

Our Catholic religion is not intended to be restricted to the private sphere. The former Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Port of Spain, Archbishop Edward Gilbert, reminded us over and over that we must move from a vertical relationship with God to a horizontal relationship with our neighbour. And yet, many parishioners who hear such words will leave Church and simply wave to parishioners who were at Church with them, without thinking about reaching out to them and giving them a lift if possible.

Perhaps if we all commit ourselves to making God's justice a reality in our communities, the world would be a better place.

The Social Doctrine of our Church is rooted in the Bible and in the documents of the Magisterium over the years.

### **Modern social teaching:**

1891 Rerum Novarum Leo XIII  
1931 Quadragesimo Anno Pius XI  
1961 Mother and Teacher John XXIII  
1963 Peace on Earth John XXIII  
1965 Church in the Modern World Vatican II  
1967 The Development of Peoples Paul VI  
1971 A Call to Action Paul VI  
1971 Justice in the World Synod of Bishops  
1979 Redeemer of Humanity John Paul II  
1981 On Human Work John Paul II  
1988 On Social Concern John Paul II  
1991 The One Hundredth Year John Paul II  
1995 The Gospel of Life John Paul II

2005 God is Love Pope Benedict XVI

2007 Saved by Hope Pope Benedict XVI

2009 Charity in Truth Pope Benedict XVI

This is not a comprehensive list, but it includes the major official texts.



Since we are called to read the signs of the times and seek to infuse Gospel values in the times in which we live, it is important to note that the social teaching of our Church has changed over its history - because of the changing social, economic, and political realities. As Bishop Jason Gordon says, “one can break this century into three periods:

“1. Industrial Revolution and its aftermath

2. Globalized world – in the 60’s and 70’s the teaching began dealing with issues involving not just relationships within nations but also between nations.

3. Post Industrial world – John Paul II’s writings reflect the dramatic changes in technology, and communication that have transformed the world.”

Blessed John Paul II argued in his encyclical, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 1987 (The social concern of the Church), that the Church’s social doctrine “belongs to the field, not of ideology, but of theology and particularly **moral theology**.”

This is reflected in our Catechism which tells us that the social teaching of the Church “proposes principles for reflection; it provides criteria for judgment; (and) it gives guidelines for action...” (2423).

Years ago the US Bishops reminded us that:

“The Church’s social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. Modern Catholic social teaching has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents. The depth and richness of this tradition can be understood best through a direct reading of these documents.”

We also get our mandate to promote social justice from our Scriptures – from the life of Christ whom we follow. We are expected to examine “the signs of the times” through the lens of Catholicism; in the light of the Gospel (*Gaudium et Spes*, 4) and in the context in which we live/ considering attitudes, values etc in today’s world. This is where the SEE/JUDGE/ACT Process assists us. It will help us as we seek to break down unjust structures; to transform society/the world; to build God’s Kingdom of justice, truth, love, and freedom; to build the civilization of love. We will look at this process tomorrow.

The challenge for us is to do as Germain Grisez says and allow our faith to illuminate the contemporary world and make its true significance appear. “That significance must be grasped and acted upon.” (Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol.2: *Living a Christian Life* (Quincy, II: Franciscan Press, 1993, 58).

A clear example of the way in which one can act relates to action that will be taken around the world on Monday 15 April which has been designated: “Global day of action on military spending. It is the day on which military spending for 2013 will be announced. 39 organisations, including Catholic organizations, will come together “to call for a new approach to our common security (and environmental justice) that will tackle the real problems in our world – an approach

that would address root causes of conflict, including environmental problems, inequality, and access to resources. Military responses, with their real and hidden costs, do not help, they threaten human security” ([www.indcatholicnews.com/](http://www.indcatholicnews.com/) ).

Currently world military spending stands at US \$1.7 trillion – “at a time of International austerity, with even greater threats to investment to build sustainable, common security at national and international levels. Billions spent on weapons and military can better be used on education, health, and development.”

Pax Christi has developed a DVD resource entitled: *Fund human needs - not war!*

And while we strive to build a culture of life, we recognise the challenges we face. Yesterday, 10 April, Uruguay became the 12<sup>th</sup> Country to legalise gay marriage. 9 States in the USA have already legalized gay marriage and there are those who are working hard to introduce such laws in the Caribbean.

Let’s return to our Biblical mandate to work for justice. If you Google “Bible verses about justice” you will see how many times in the Bible we are urged to seek justice. Here are a few of my favourite quotations:

1. When Jesus began his Ministry – after the Temptation in the wilderness/desert, we find him in the Synagogue reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. I believe that we get our mandate from this reading. It states:  
“The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me,  
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour.”
2. Micah 6:8: “...this is what God asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your god.”
3. Deuteronomy 16:20: “Strict justice must be your ideal, so that you may live in rightful possession of the land that God is giving to you.”
4. Psalm 33:4-5: “The word of God is integrity itself...he loves virtue and justice.”
5. Proverbs 5: The wicked do not know what justice means, but those who seek the LORD understand it fully. (those who fear God understand everything).
6. Isaiah 1:17: “ Cease to do evil, Learn to do good, search for justice, help the oppressed, be just to the orphan, plead for the widow.”
7. James 2:14-16 tells us that Faith without good works is dead: “Take the case, my brothers, of someone who has never done a single good act but claims that he has faith. Will that faith save him? If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, ‘I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty’, without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead.”

You can check out other quotations yourself. We use the Jerusalem Bible so some of the quotations you will find on the internet will be slightly different. Both the Old Testament and the

New Testament address issues relating to justice and mercy. In the Old Testament the teachings of the prophets (see quotes above) and the 10 Commandments are guides to inform our actions. In the New Testament, Jesus' entire life teaches us about justice and mercy; about concern for the welfare of others. And, at the last supper, he left us with a new commandment: "I give you a new commandment: love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:34).

Blessed John Paul II highlighted this commandment when he said to the Bishops of India in 1986: "Over and over again the Church proclaims her conviction that the core of the Gospel is fraternal love springing from love of God. The proclamation of the new commandment of love can never be separated from efforts to promote the integral advancement of man/woman in justice and peace."

During this Year of Faith (Oct 11, 2012 – Nov 23, 2013) the Commission which I Chair, CCSJ, hopes to organize a series of Workshops on some of the 46 Parables in the Bible. The messages in these parables send a clear message to us as to how we should live our lives – demonstrating love for God, for each other and for all of creation. The Gospel vision is one of love, compassion, right relationships, values and virtues and so on. See e.g. The Good Samaritan, Lazarus and Dives, The Prodigal Son, The lost sheep, The lost coin, The widow's mite, The unforgiving servant, The unjust judge, The barren fig tree etc. If we are disciples of Christ we should live by Gospel values. Perhaps you can organize study sessions, seminars or workshops on some of the parables and apply their messages to the times in which we live.

I want to link this last quotation from James - about linking faith to good works - to a statement made by Pope Francis I at his inaugural Mass. As you know, he spoke in his homily of the need to protect "all creation, the beauty of the created world." This, he said, "means respecting each of God's creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about."

Pope Francis I warned of the consequences if people do not look after one another.

"Whenever human beings fail to live up to this responsibility, whenever we fail to care for creation and for our brothers and sisters, the way is opened to destruction and hearts are hardened."

And he urged those in power to live up to their duties, and to all to avoid evil, hatred and pride. He said:

"True power is service. The Pope must serve all the people, especially the poor, the weak, the vulnerable...I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: Let us be 'protectors' of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the

environment...Let us never forget that authentic power is service...Only those who serve with love are able to protect."

It is words like these that motivate us to move forward and live Gospel values.

There is one book that contains what Cardinal Martino calls "the rich patrimony of Catholic social doctrine." It is the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (show a copy of the book). The Compendium states that "the formative value of the Church's social doctrine should receive more attention in catechesis" (529). The purpose of this exposure to the richness of the Church's social doctrine is to motivate action that will lead to the 'humanisation of temporal realities' (530). For this reason too exposure to social doctrine should feature prominently in institutes of Catholic education (532) and in the formation of candidates for the priesthood (533)."

Thankfully, the Compendium is available free of charge on the internet. Just Google the title: Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/...](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/...)

I was fortunate to have been present at a Conference in the Vatican when the Compendium was officially launched and had to rush to get an early copy as those present bought every copy that was printed in that first batch. The Compendium was Commissioned by Blessed John Paul II and completed by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, of which Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino was President. The current President of the PCJP is Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson (Ghanaian).

The Compendium was presented to the Press in Oct 2004 and it was launched at the Vatican in July 2005. It is written in 3 parts. It contains 12 Chapters and 583 paragraphs. It "offers a complete summary of the fundamental framework of the doctrinal corpus of Catholic social teaching...which is the fruit of careful magisterial reflection and an expression of the Church's constant commitment in fidelity to the grace of salvation wrought in Christ and in loving concern for humanity's destiny" (Compendium 8).

It is worth reading Cardinal Martino's letters in the Introduction of the book. Inter alia, he says that it is offered "to the faithful and to all people of good will, as food for human and spiritual growth, for individuals and communities alike... This work also shows the value of Catholic social doctrine as an instrument of evangelization (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 54), because it places the human person and society in relationship with the light of the Gospel. The principles of the Church's social doctrine, which are based on the natural law, are then seen to be confirmed and strengthened, in the faith of the Church, by the Gospel of Christ...

"It is ...apparent that the Church cannot fail to make her voice heard concerning the "new things" (*res novae*) typical of the modern age, because it belongs to her to invite all people to do all they can to bring about an authentic civilization oriented ever more towards integral human development in solidarity.

“4. Contemporary cultural and social issues involve above all the lay faithful, who are called, as the Second Vatican Council reminds us, to deal with temporal affairs and order them according to God's will (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 31). We can therefore easily understand the fundamental importance of the formation of the laity, so that the holiness of their lives and the strength of their witness will contribute to human progress. This document intends to help them in this daily mission.”

This last paragraph is of particular importance to all of us. The vocation of a Catholic is to seek to live holy, virtuous lives. But remember that we do not journey alone and that we are bound to love God and love our neighbour. Loving our neighbour has global dimensions in our interdependent world. Loving God and our neighbour means that we must act for justice. We are also called to cooperate with others – including other faith communities, to serve the human family and to build the common good.

You may remember the wonderful quotation from the Synod of Bishops document: Justice in the world, 1971: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel...they call this justice an essential part of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”

Before I outline the key social justice principles, it is important to be clear about why we must not only be concerned about our own salvation. During this Year of Faith, we have been encouraged you to read our Catechism, the documents of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council etc. A key document is the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World: *Gaudium et Spes* (1965). The Preface outlines very powerfully, the need for us to reach out to others. It states: “*The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.*”(1) *Gaudium et Spes* highlights the problem of living divided lives:

“This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age... let there be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part, and religious life on the other. The Christian who neglects his temporal duties neglects his duties toward his neighbour and even God, and jeopardizes his eternal salvation.... In the exercise of all their earthly activities, Christians can thereby gather their humane, domestic, professional, social and technical enterprises into one vital synthesis with religious values, under the supreme direction of which all things are harmonized for God’s glory” (GS, no. 43)

“Coming down to practical and particularly urgent consequences, this council lays stress on reverence for man; everyone must consider his every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all His life and the means necessary to living it with dignity,(8) so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus(9).

“In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbour of every person without exception and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, "As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me" (Matt. 25:40).

Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or wilful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are supreme dishonour to the Creator” (GS, no. 27).

Over the years various Popes have written encyclicals to guide the Church/the Faithful on various aspects of Catholic doctrine. I have shared with you a handout listing some of the key encyclicals that have been written over the years.

Although many were written before the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the publication on 15 May 1891 of Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* ("On the Conditions of Labour") – written at a time when many workers were being exploited. It is seen as a key resource on the dignity and rights and duties of workers and of employers. (Elaborate).

The Compendium deals in some depth with each of the key themes that are at the heart of our Catholic social tradition. This evening we will simply go through a brief summary of each of these themes/principles. (Power-point presentation on each Theme/Principle and share handout for further information – see e.g. [www.osjspm.org](http://www.osjspm.org)).

## **MAJOR THEMES/PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING**

- The Sanctity of Life and the Dignity of the Human Person
- The Common Good, Family and Community
- Rights and duties/responsibilities
- Option for the poor and the vulnerable
- The dignity of work and the rights of workers

- Participation
  - The role of Government and Subsidiarity
  - Economic Justice
  - Stewardship of Creation
  - Solidarity (global solidarity and development)
  - Role of Government
  - Promotion of Peace and disarmament
  - The universal destination of goods
- Please note that this is not an “official” list. Some individuals focus on some and not on others.

I wish to end my presentation this evening by referring to the last section of the Compendium entitled “Building the civilization of love” (580-583). The words in these paragraphs bring home to us what our role is as Christians. Love is the answer to all our problems. If we loved each other and all God’s creation we would not be in the mess that we are in currently. This last section states, *inter alia*:

*“580. The immediate purpose of the Church's social doctrine is to propose the principles and values that can sustain a society worthy of the human person... Among these principles, solidarity includes all the others in a certain way.... Light is shed on this principle by the primacy of love, “the distinguishing mark of Christ's disciples (cf. Jn 13:35)”. Jesus teaches us that “the fundamental law of human perfection, and consequently of the transformation of the world, is the new commandment of love” (cf. Mt 22:40, Jn 15:12; Col 3:14; Jas 2:8). Personal behaviour is fully human when it is born of love, manifests love and is ordered to love. This truth also applies in the social sphere; Christians must be deeply convinced witnesses of this, and they are to show by their lives how love is the only force (cf. 1 Cor 12:31-14:1) that can lead to personal and social perfection, allowing society to make progress towards the good.*

**581.** *Love must be present in and permeate every social relationship...* This love may be called “social charity” or “political charity” and must embrace the entire human race. “Social love” is the antithesis of egoism and individualism...it must not be forgotten that the integral development of the person and social growth mutually influence each other. **Selfishness, therefore, is the most insidious enemy of an ordered society.** History shows how hearts are devastated when men and women are incapable of recognizing other values or other effective

realities apart from material goods, the obsessive quest for which **suffocates and blocks their ability to give of themselves.**

**582.** *In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life — political, economic and cultural — must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity.* “If justice is in itself suitable for ‘arbitration’ between people concerning the reciprocal distribution of objective goods in an equitable manner, love and only love (including that kindly love we call ‘mercy’) is capable of restoring man to himself”. **Human relationships cannot be governed solely according to the measure of justice. “Christians know that love is the reason for God's entering into relationship with man. And it is love which he awaits as man's response. Consequently, love is also the loftiest and most noble form of relationship possible between human beings. Love must thus enliven every sector of human life and extend to the international order. Only a humanity in which there reigns the ‘civilization of love’ will be able to enjoy authentic and lasting peace”. In this regard, the Magisterium highly recommends solidarity because it is capable of guaranteeing the common good and fostering integral human development: love “makes one see in neighbour another self”.**

**583.** *Only love can completely transform the human person.* Such a transformation does not mean eliminating the earthly dimension in a disembodied spirituality. Those who think they can live the supernatural virtue of love without taking into account its corresponding natural foundations, which include duties of justice, deceive themselves. **“Charity is the greatest social commandment. It respects others and their rights. It requires the practice of justice and it alone makes us capable of it. Charity inspires a life of self-giving: ‘Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it’ (Lk 17:33)”.** Nor can love find its full expression solely in the earthly dimension of human relationships and social relations, because it is in relation to God that it finds its full effectiveness. “In the evening of this life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is blemished in your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in your own *justice* and to receive from your *love* the eternal possession of *yourself*”.

**END**