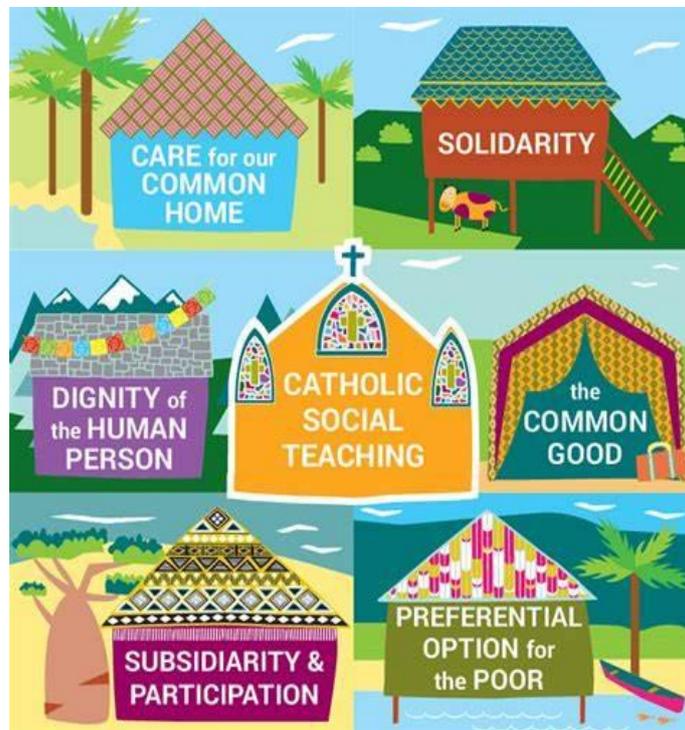




# Catholic Social Teaching

Accompanying PowerPoint Notes for School Leaders



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## CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

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**SLIDE 1**

**OPENING SLIDE**

**SLIDE 2**

**CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING – SHARE THE GOOD NEWS**

Perhaps one of the richest repositories of Catholic teachings are those on social justice. The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom which addresses the issues around building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. These teachings aim at creating a world based on gospel values and a society that seeks to live and interact with others in a manner that is truly respectful of all humanity because each has a special dignity, and because each is created in the image and likeness of God. Catholic Social Teaching is a call to live out the words contained in the prayer that Jesus himself gave to us, *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

**SLIDE 3**

**CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

The principles of Catholic Social Teaching and modern Catholic Social Teaching originate from the time of Pope Leo XIII in 1891 when he published his pastoral letter on the conditions of the working class. This document is called *Rerum Novarum*. Since then the Popes have reinforced and contributed to church teachings relating to social justice.

Catholic Social Teaching applies the Gospel in a way that brings about social justice and social love for all people. It is built around the call from Jesus that invites us to see the other person as a brother and sister. In the parable of *The Sheep and the Goats (Matt 25:31-46)*, Jesus makes the profound statement *"Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."* (Matt 25:40 RSV)

For the Catholic school community, living in communion with Catholic Social Teaching requires an inclusive sense of love, generosity and action for those who need our help, support, advice, and guidance. Catholic Social Teaching is an essential part of the Christian mission.

Saint Pope John Paul II fully espoused the importance of Catholic Social Teaching. In particular he stressed the connection of the source, history and development of Catholic Social Teaching tracing it back in sacred scripture from the Book of Genesis through the Gospels and into the writings of the Apostles.

In the earliest writings found in the Acts of the Apostles, the message of outreach to those in need was paramount. The early Christian communities were known for their many acts of generosity and love, *“And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as they had need.”* Acts 2:44

Pope Benedict XVI provides a beautiful quotation that explains the essence of Catholic Social Teaching, *“No man is an island. The lives of others continually spill over into mine ... and conversely, my life spills over into that of others: for better and for worse.”*

Pope Francis places Catholic Social Teaching at the heart of his pontifical ministry. His recent encyclicals all speak to this agenda e.g. *Laudato Si’*; *Fratelli Tutti*.

In summary, the living out of Catholic Social Teaching is seen in the tree, rooted in Jesus, strengthened by the message of love and service which Jesus gave at the Last Supper *“Love one another as I have loved you”* (Jn 13:34), and brought to fruition through the leadership within the Church.

Jesus talked about the growth of the Kingdom of God using the imagery of the mustard seed. The smallest of seeds, yet capable of growing into one of the largest bushes that provides shelter for all the birds of the earth.

This is what Catholic Social Teaching is all about – small acts of love and kindness, done in unselfish ways. These acts of genuine love (*agapé*) can be truly transformational.

Saint Mother Teresa and many others advocate practising Catholic Social Teaching in small beautiful ways.

All of us have the capability and capacity to be part of renewing the world. We can give the oxygen to love whenever we commit to living our lives according to the values of Catholic Social Teaching. It is worth examining, it is worth sharing this wonderful message – Catholic Social Teaching is GOOD NEWS. *“Mighty oaks from little acorns grow”*

**SLIDE 5**

**HOLISTIC FORMATION AND EXCELLENCE**

“To touch the hearts of our students and to inspire them with the Christian spirit is the greatest miracle you can perform; and one which God expects from you, for this is the purpose of your work.”

*John Baptist de la Salle – Patron Saint of Teachers*

The Catholic school addresses the formation of the whole person - moral, spiritual, physical, emotional, academic and social.

In keeping with the legal requirement to deliver the NI Curriculum (The Big Picture), the Catholic school, like all other schools, provides a broad and balanced learning experience that contributes to the empowerment and holistic development of their pupils so that they can lead meaningful lives, form relationships and contribute to the good of society.

However, Catholic schools recognise that education is much more than preparing for examinations and being a contributor to society and the economy. The curriculum of the Catholic school is pupil centred. It seeks to make the gospel values explicit in all curricular and extra-curricular activities. The needs of all pupils are facilitated and supported, and the provision of appropriate educational opportunities and pathways are respectful of all abilities and talents. The learning and teaching environment in the Catholic school endeavours to inspire and support pupil aspiration and ambition. Relationships between staff, pupils and parents/guardians are based on mutual respect, support and understanding. The uniqueness of each child is valued and celebrated. Within the Catholic school, teachers have the highest expectations for their students. Excellence of educational opportunity and provision is inherent within the Catholic school; to accept less is anathema to Catholic Social Teaching.

**SLIDE 6**

**TIME TO THINK**

At this point in the presentation the participants are to be given time to **THINK, REFLECT, RECORD and RESPOND** to how Catholic Social Teaching finds expression within the school community at both a personal and systemic level.

**SLIDE 7**

**LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON**

“Things have a price and can be for sale, but people have a dignity that is priceless and worth far more than things.”

*Pope Francis*

The first social teaching is that respect for all human life is fundamental. The Church teaches that all human life is sacred because each person is precious and is a gift from God. The idea that each life has a value is not exclusive to Catholic Social Teaching; it does share a lot in common with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which are also universal, inviolable and inalienable.

The Church’s teaching on the life and dignity of the human person states that all of us have equality before God. Therefore, no one is lesser than another.

The principle of Life and Human Dignity means that Catholic Social Teaching takes a strong position on issues around the start and end of life as well as everything in between. It also challenges us to consider how society supports those experiencing discrimination as well as those finding themselves having to cope with life-challenging physical, emotional or medical conditions. The test of any institution is whether it enhances or threatens human life and dignity.

The principle of human dignity means that the Catholic school needs to teach and promote the value that each person is unique and has a God given dignity.

## Time to Think, Pair and Share

- In terms of the school community, how do we uphold the life and dignity of the human person?
- Take some time to write down how you see the school community uphold the life and dignity of the human person. Once you have recorded your thoughts share them with two other people.

### How do we support our pupils/students in their understanding and actions in terms of the life and dignity of the human person?

#### You may wish to consider this under the following headings:

- Curriculum
- School Assemblies
- Outreach to the vulnerable
- Guest speakers
- Connection with groups, organisations that advocate for the rights of the unborn, the rights of the marginalised/homeless, the rights of the elderly etc
- Promoting positive behaviour policy and practice

## SLIDE 9

### SCHOOL, COMMUNITY AND THE COMMON GOOD

“The Catholic school community places itself as a source of service, not only to its pupils but to the community and wider society.”

*The Catholic School, p 62*

The Catholic school is rooted in its community and as such responds to the needs of that community. This connection with community happens through the family, as first and primary educators of their children and through parish links as the focal point within the community. The Catholic school also recognises its responsibility to be fully integrated with wider society locally, nationally and globally.

Catholic schools seek to form pupils who will become confident and active contributors to society in a way which reflects their understanding and commitment to the gospel values of service, equality and social justice.

Focussing on the 'common good' is central to Catholic Social Teaching. This means that all are equal and therefore all should have available to them that which is needed for human development and dignity, food, clothing, protection, education, health care. This is not just for self and local communities but for the wider world.

Catholic schools engage in activities which promote the Common Good through awakening a sense of social justice and action that is grounded in the example of Christ and lived inspiration of Christian practice that works and advocates for social justice for the marginalised.

## SLIDE 10

### OPTION FOR THE POOR AND THE VULNERABLE

Catholic Social Teaching believes in the preferential option for the poor. Consider just who the poor and vulnerable are. Poverty and vulnerability present in so many different ways. Poverty can be financial, material, emotional, spiritual, physical, educational.

Vulnerability can be seen in lack of confidence/self-esteem, anxiety, illness, estrangement in relationships, inability to learn, lack of skills, disability, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, creed.

"If I encounter a person sleeping outdoors on a cold night, I can view him or her as an annoyance, an idler, an obstacle in my path, a troubling sight, a problem for politicians to sort out, or even a piece of refuse cluttering a public space. Or I can respond with faith and charity and see in this person a human being with a dignity identical to my own, a creature infinitely loved by the Father, an image of God, a brother or sister redeemed by Jesus Christ."

*Pope Francis (Gaudete et exsultate, 98)*

## Reflect on the way in which you see the strength of your school responding to the poor and the vulnerable:

- Is there a genuine desire and commitment in terms of the options for the poor and the vulnerable?
- Is our school a welcoming and secure place for all?
- Does the curriculum offer excellence of opportunity for all levels of ability?
- Is the pastoral support connected to the needs of the pupil/student and adult members of the school community?
- Are our children and young people who are experiencing any form of social isolation, poverty, illness, disability or anxiety cared for, supported and monitored in terms of their safeguarding and welfare?
- Does our school have strong relationships of support with appropriate external support agencies?
- Does our school have a welfare fund that is managed by BOG, Principal and Senior Staff?
- Are there places of safety, sanctuary and nurturing for those who are distressed within the school campus?
- Does our school conduct REM of its pupils/students to ensure educational and physical milestones are being reached, and if not, is there a procedure for remediation?

### SLIDE 12

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RIGHTS OF THE WORKERS

Pope Leo XIII established the understanding that work is at the centre of the Church's reflection on human identity and activity. *Rerum Novarum* and many papal encyclicals for the past 125 years have argued for the protection of workers and the right to form a Union. With each encyclical, each generation addresses the challenge of the central nature of work within the changing and ever complex situation of its time.

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls work “a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth; a path to growth, human development and fulfillment” (128). The Pope adds (quoting in part from Benedict XVI’s *Caritas in Veritate*), “It is essential that ‘we continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone’” and that the “broader objective should always be to allow (human beings) a dignified life through work.”

### **Some things to consider:**

- Does our school have a staffing policy that is regularly updated and made available to all staff members (both teaching and support staff)?
- Are there opportunities to affirm the work of staff and to celebrate the achievements of the school community?
- Are staff able to have their breaks and lunchtimes in comfortable places?
- Is there an area in the staff room that is specifically for Trade Union notices?
- Does the principal have planned meetings with the Union reps within the school?
- Is the school management structure known to all staff?
- Are employment opportunities within the school conducted in accordance with the employing authority management scheme?
- Is there a health and wellbeing policy that is known and available to all staff?
- Is there a complaints procedure for staff?
- Is the environment of the school conducive to a safe, comfortable and pleasant working environment?
- Is the CPD of all staff managed by the SLT and BOG?
- Are there good lines of communication within the school organization?

## **SLIDE 13**

### **ONE HUMAN FAMILY**

The Christology of One Human Family is central to the messages of Catholic Social Teaching. Jesus' words, *"May they all be one, just as you are in me and I am in you"* (Jn17:21) echoes down through the history of the Church.

As Pope Francis says we need to strengthen that conviction of belonging to one single human family. How can this find expression in our school community?

### **Some things to consider:**

- How do we communicate that we are a living Christian community?
- How do we create and maintain a family identity within the school and with other schools in our community, diocese, local area and with the global world?

- What are the values that we teach our students/pupils about respect, tolerance, acceptance, love and compassion for those with whom we live, work and share the planet with?
- How do we connect our school with the wider community and world in a spirit of solidarity and accompaniment?
- How do we share and promote positive role models who live a life of service for the good of others?
- How do we support family life within our school and wider community?

It might be useful to take a passage from *Laudato Si'* that speaks about what Pope Francis means by one single human family for the participants to read, digest and then comment on.

## SLIDE 14

### **“PEACE I LEAVE YOU, MY PEACE I GIVE YOU” JN 14:27**

Peace is the gift that Christ offers to humanity. A gift that we can all enjoy and share.

The peace of Christ that passes all understanding is such a tremendous gift, one that is yearned for and yet at times peace seems so fragile and difficult to achieve.

When we think of peace it can be viewed from so many different perspectives. There is peace – a cessation of violence and war; an inner peace that comes from acceptance, trust, love and faith, peace of mind, peace – a calmness, a sense that you are alone but not lonely or isolated.

In the busy world of our schools how do we contribute to providing peace and an oasis of calm for students, pupils and staff?

#### **Take a few moments to consider how you actually do this:**

- At a school collegiate level do purposeful and supportive relationships exist amongst staff, pupils and their families?
- Through the curriculum do we plan and demonstrate opportunities for showing what peace is, how it can be destroyed and how it can be built up and sustained?
- Are there messages of peace from scripture, literature, history, life etc displayed around the school?

- How regularly do school assemblies address the importance of peace as an individual response?
- How is the school connected with peace projects locally, nationally and globally?
- Does the school provide places of calm and peace where pupils and staff can have a sacred space to place themselves in the quiet of the Divine presence?
- Are there opportunities for the school community to have celebrations of prayer and sacrament that focus on peace?
- When Christmas is being celebrated in the school community, is there reference to the birth of the Prince of Peace - the real gift of this holy season?

## SLIDE 15

### CARE FOR CREATION

There are so many resources that assist in the promotion of care for creation. It is worth taking time to connect the message of care for the planet, our common home, with the message of Christ and the writings of the Church. The ecology message is not a new message, it is found in the Book of Genesis when humanity is charged with the role of responsible stewardship.

But we speak to **Generation Now** and we speak on the importance of the need to truly care for all of creation.

When doing this from a Catholic Social Teaching perspective, the focus is not purely on campaigns and advocacy, important as they are, but more from a why do we act and behave towards the planet and why is there a need for change.

Take some time to think through what the school is doing in terms of caring for the planet and for promoting within students, a culture of doing things in a better and more sustainable way.

#### Consider:

- Does the school promote a Reduce, Reuse, Recycle policy for school items?
- What is the school's stance on plastics?
- Does the school have a school uniform swap, sharing scheme?

- If your school has been awarded the Eco Flag, what have the noticeable changes been in terms of the pupils' understanding of caring for creation?
- Do the pupils/students see care for creation as a purely ecological issue or do you think they see caring for creation as a responsibility that God has placed on humans and that we are called to use all our skills, talents and abilities to care for the gift of this creation?

**SLIDE 16**

**As we conclude our session looking at the meaning of Catholic Social Teaching, I invite you to Pray.**