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| **Catholic Social Teaching**  **Accompanying PowerPoint Notes for Teachers**  **Cephas ProGramme** |
| See the source image |
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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 3-4**

**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 13:3*4), 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**

**TIME TO THINK**

At this point in the presentation give the students some time to **think, reflect, record and respond** to how Catholic Social Teaching finds expression within the school and within their own personal lives as well as in the society that they live in.

**SLIDE 6-7**

**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 world we live in, how is the life and dignity of the human person respected and valued?
* What do you understand to be the things that degrade and dehumanise the human person?
* Take some time to write down how you consciously uphold the life and dignity of the human person. Once you have recorded your thoughts share them with two other people.
* What examples from the life of Jesus highlight the Christian response to giving dignity and respect to others?
* Can you cite examples of individuals who work unselfishly to promote Christian dignity and compassion for humanity?

**SLIDE 8**

**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.

**Discussion Time:**

**Give the students the opportunity to discuss how they see their school community promoting social justice and action for promoting the Common Good.**

**It is also useful at this point to take time to explain what is meant by the Common Good.**

**SLIDE 9-10**

**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 within school, in terms of the options for the poor and the vulnerable?
* Is our school a welcoming and secure place for all?
* Does the range of subjects offered in our school provide opportunities for all students?
* Is the pastoral care of our school supportive of students who are experiencing any form of isolation or discrimination?
* Do we as senior students fulfil our roles as school leaders in a way that supports the poor and the vulnerable?
* What can you, as the senior students actively do to care for the vulnerable in school?
* Has the Student Council held an assembly or other event that informs students of the student-led and school initiatives that exist to support them?

**SLIDE 11**

**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:**

* Have you considered your future career options?
* What are your future ambitions in terms of work?
* What examples are you aware of that do not respect the rights and dignity of workers?
* It is useful to take time to research, reflect and raise awareness of examples of worker exploitation. Consider unjust work practices such as zero hours contracts, slave labour, child labour etc. Balance this with the good practices and the campaigns led by the Church and Christian organisations that advocate and act for the rights of the workers.

**SLIDE 12**

**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” (Jn 17:21)* 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?

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

**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 our school?
* How can we contribute to a strong school identity?
* What does One Human Family actually mean to you?

**Please note that the Cephas Programme contains a module on the theme of “One Human Family”.**

**SLIDE 13**

**“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.

**Suggested ideas:**

* Have a discussion around what students understand by peace. Place a large sheet of white paper on the floor, give each student a piece of paper, play some appropriate music and ask them to write a word or words that means peace to them. After a suitable period of time invite them to come forward and put their word on the sheet and comment.
* Are there messages of peace from scripture, literature, history, life etc displayed around the school?
* Invite the students to research scripture, literature, history, life etc that give strong messages of peace. Take time to record and print them out and make this a powerful display around the school. They can also do this as a media file exercise.

**SLIDE 14**

**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 why is it necessary for humans to adopt a more caring and sustained attitude and approach to looking after planet earth?

Eco education has been delivered in schools for many decades, so why do you think issues such as the incorrect disposal of litter, environmental damage and mismanagement of the world's precious resources continues?

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:**

* Invite the students to consider ways that they can lead an agreed initiative that can promote care for the school environment.
* 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 15**

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