



Catholic Social Teaching

“(The Church) has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice...cannot prevail and prosper.”

– Pope Benedict XVI

■ WHAT IS CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING?

Catholic Social Teaching outlines the Church’s vision of a just society that is grounded in the Bible.

– Australian Catholic Social Justice Council

PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

- **All life is sacred** Human beings are created in the image of God and, therefore, are endowed with dignity.
- **We are one and we are many** Each person has an essential dignity but there must be a balance between individual needs and the common good.
- **No person is an island; we need each other** Human beings are social by nature and do not exist easily as individuals.
- **Self direction whenever possible** This principle, often referred to as subsidiary, recognises that society is based on organisations or communities of people with individuals making their own decisions.
- **Social institutions are there to serve people** The social order must uphold the dignity of the person.
- **The wellbeing of all** The purpose of government is the promotion of the common good. Governments are required to actively participate in society to promote and ensure social justice and equity for all members.

- **Taking part in the society is a right** Individuals and groups must be enabled to participate in society.
- **God’s creation is for all** The world’s goods are meant for all.
- **Those most in need come first** This refers to seeing the world through the eyes of the poor and standing with the poor in solidarity. The teaching of Jesus gives special place to those most in need.
- **The World has been placed in our care** The Earth is God’s gift and all species have a rightful place in it. Humans share this habitat with other creatures and have a special duty as stewards and trustees of the Earth.

We know that not everyone in the world is as fortunate as us. Many people struggle to survive from day to day, while we live in comfort, with three meals a day and a bed to sleep in each night.

If we lived in a socially just world, everyone would have equal opportunities in life and access to basic resources that enable them to flourish. We know this is not yet a reality, but we aim to achieve this through our good works. Every person whose life is improved through the work of your conference moves us one small step closer to a socially just world becoming a reality for all.

■ DID YOU KNOW?

Between 2009 and 2010, 713 million hours were volunteered by 5.4 million Australians and 70% of Australians had donated money to an organisation in the last month.

Volunteering Australia Annual Review 2009-2010 www.volunteeringaustralia.org

Since 1948 there have been 63 peace keeping operations all over the world such as the United Nations peace keeping operation during the Rwandan genocide.

United Nations www.un.org/en/peacekeeping

In 2008, the Australian Government supported overseas development through numerous projects totaling \$3.173 billion.

Aus Aid www.ausaid.gov.au

ACTIVITY 1

STATIONS OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Catholic Social Teaching is not just a set of guides developed by the Catholic Church but rather principles that shape who we are as individuals and how we treat others.

Do you think these are relevant to your everyday life?

As a developed nation, do you think the fundamental value of human life and nature is obvious in the policies set by the Australian Government?

Pick one issue each, within Australia or the international community, and consider this in light of Catholic Social Teachings and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. What were the issues or injustices in this situation? Discuss any inequalities. What are some underlying causes for these situations?

Some possible topics to think about:

- Hurricane Katrina
- Cronulla riots
- Refugees in Australia
- Homelessness
- Education
- HIV/AIDS
- Global warming/ climate change





ACTIVITY 2

THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL

While donating money, goods or even some of our time to charities every once in a while is great, the most impact can be made through ongoing volunteer work and commitment to justice.

1. Think of two people who have committed themselves to the fight against injustice. Look up some information about these individuals and discuss their journey in working towards justice.

2. Research one organisation or body that serves by fighting injustice and report back to the group.

What are the aims of the organisation?

What is the philosophy of the organisation?

What impact has the organisation had on their cause and any injustices?

How are the principles of Catholic Social Teaching reflected in the organisation's aims?



STORY 1

A teacher wanted to explain the idea of 'solidarity' (one of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching) to her class. She found it hard to explain, but thought it was very important for her students to understand.

The teacher decided to volunteer for Night Patrol, a Vinnies program where volunteers travel in a van to various points around the city, offering food, support and companionship to people

experiencing homelessness.

During her experience she met a man who had experienced homelessness for quite some time. He told her how Vinnies had done more for him than just give him food or money. That they had stood by him, and worked with him, to help him make his life better. To the teacher, this is what solidarity meant, to walk with someone, alongside them, working together to assist them.

STORY 2

Chris, a high school student, became concerned about the elderly within his local community.

He decided that he wanted to do something to help. He contacted his local Vinnies Youth Coordinator who was organising Green Team - a group of young people helping the elderly with gardening and yard maintenance.

Chris showed a strong sense of compassion and solidarity, and a deep understanding of the dignity of every person. He showed us that it doesn't matter how young or old you are, everyone is important and everyone can help.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Be an advocate for social justice! See those around you who are facing hardship in their lives, and speak out against these injustices. Organise awareness days at your school, highlighting these issues.

Organise Vinnies appeals within your school. Raise funds for the Vinnies Winter & Christmas Appeals. Show solidarity. Organise a Winter Sleepout at your school and remember those who experience homelessness every night.

Take care of our environment. Be conscious of how much energy you use, and where you can cut down. Organise litter clean up days in your school and local area. Recycle as much as you can and encourage others to do the same.

For more information

Volunteering Australia website www.volunteeringaustralia.org

Catholic Social Teaching resource at the Office for Social Justice website www.osjspm.org

St Vincent de Paul Society website www.vinnies.org.au

SOCIAL JUSTICE RESOURCES

Visit the Catholic Diocese of Richmond's Education for Justice and Peace website www.richmonddiocese.org

Global Education website www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au for a range of age appropriate lesson plans on national and international topics.