



Building Community

They are Jesus, and what you do for them you do for Him. It is the only way of knowing and believing in our love.

God created human beings not to live independently, but in communities. We are social, in need of company in the form of families and communities. Communities enable children and young people to learn. The social interaction allows for the passing on of the wisdom of previous generations, and socially educating them on living and participating as a group. We all have a responsibility to one another to work together for the common good of everyone in the communities we live in, although this common good is not just the total of each persons need. The idea is that everyone should contribute to



the community, using their God given talents, to improve the community as a whole. By doing this, everyone is able to reach their full potential, helped along, and encouraged by the people around them.



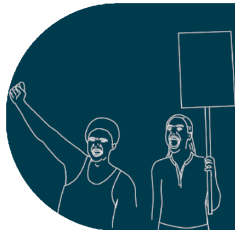
It is very important to remember that everyone is made in the image and likeness of God, they have human dignity. As a result, every individual has a right to participate in community, no matter their intellect, social status or financial situation.

Currently, in many societies, how well people are treated depends on these things. Many people's worth is measured by what they can contribute to society. In fact,

Catholic social teaching says we should respect and accept every single person no matter what. Each person deserves our respect as it is a gift from God, not something that needs to be earned.

Each person is called to live in community with one another. However this cannot be a passive status. Each person is called to participate in the community, not just by using their talents, but also maintaining the integrity of the society. Voting, holding leaders to account, and safeguarding the most vulnerable members of the society are vital aspects of participating in the community that we live in.





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Examples

Little Sister Magdeleine of Jesus, founder of the Little Sisters of Jesus, believed that life out in the wider community is essential in order to be a witness to the love of Jesus, and to be a meeting place for everyone; workers, employers, Christians, Muslims creating a loving community for all. In a note to Pope Pius XII, Sr Magdeleine stated that the communities of the Little Sisters of Jesus must “not be set apart but live intimately mingled in with the mass of humankind like leaven in the dough. That we may make ourselves all things to all people, Arabs in the midst of Arabs, nomads in the midst of nomads. That we may take on their language, their customs, and even their way of thinking.” By accepting that every person is created in God’s image, and loving them so, communities with no barriers can be forged.

2015 marked a year that made history. This was the first year that every single county on the planet consented to allow women to vote. Fifteen years earlier, 6 countries still had not allowed women to vote. However, despite this being a step forward for women there are still restrictive social and cultural laws in some countries meaning that it is harder for women to vote. In some countries women are not allowed to be seen in public when pregnant, in other places women have to be given permission from a husband or guardian to leave the house, so if they didn’t want them to vote, the women would not be allowed. These scenarios show that despite being a world of equal people, the reality is that a lot of women are unable to participate fully in the communities that they live in, and have their voice heard.

What can you do?

- If you can, vote! Participate in your community by having your say on who leads your country and represents your local area.
- Speak to your local MP, talk to them about the realities of people in your locality.
- Do you know any lonely people? How can you include them in activities in your local area?
- Can you visit people in your local care home or hospital to ensure they don’t feel isolated?
- Do you have a passion for something you could share with others? Get together with people in your local area and share your talents with them.
- Care about your local environment, get together with others to help clean your area and make it a pleasant place to live.
- Educate yourself on the world you live in. Where are communities strong, what can you learn from them?



Caring for our Planet

We are all stewards of creation. It is our duty to look after the earth.

Our planet is a gift from God. He created the earth to be our home, a source of life and food for everyone and everything on it. Genesis 2:15 says that when God was making the earth “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” - he made us stewards of creation. Just as we would treat a gift from a friend with love and respect, we should look after God’s gift of creation, too. Because creation is a gift, humanity needs to recognise and take up responsibility for this gift. As we are created in God’s image, we too should look after, nurture, and ensure the continuation of the plants and animals on the planet.



Recently this Catholic social teaching principle has come to the forefront of people’s attention. With ever worsening reports on the future of our planet, and Pope Francis’ call in *Laudato Si* to ‘care for our common home’, individuals are now feeling compelled to listen to “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”.



Fossil fuels are damaging the atmosphere of the planet, average global temperatures are rising, the polar ice caps are melting causing sea levels to rise, and the Amazon rainforest, the earth’s lungs, are being cleared at a rate of one football field every single minute. These are all contributing to what is being called ‘climate change’. Climate change is altering the very nature of the earth, making areas less hospitable for people, plants and animals. There are also more extreme weather events like droughts, floods, tropical storms and crop failures. These disasters tend to hit the poorest communities of the world first, as they have less infrastructure to protect against these phenomena. Climate migration is becoming

increasingly common with whole communities fleeing the effects of changes to their natural environments. Increasingly profits and money are taking precedence over humans and businesses. Many people are becoming more wrapped up in consumerism, buying and having things that they don’t really need, without thinking about the cost that this has on the environment. Items are thrown away without thought and wasted without hesitation. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis observes that “our earth is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth”. It is our responsibility to change how we treat the earth, becoming more in tune with the needs of the planet, and those living on it. We need to re-engage with our role of being the species that looks after the world, not those who destroy it.





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In 2019 the United Nations released research done by leading scientists on the loss of plant and animal life, or the biodiversity of the planet. The report showed that around 1 million species face extinction, much of which could happen within the next few decades. It also outlined the fact that the number of species on the planet has reduced by an average of 20% in the last 120 years. The most sensitive types of animals have been hit the worst, with the number of amphibian groups decreasing by 40% and one third of each coral type and marine mammals facing extinction. However, it is not just animals that are affected, 75% of natural environments had been severely changed by human activities, altering the habitats of plants and animals living on the lands.

The Pacific Islands are particularly vulnerable to climate change. The increase in global temperatures and melting polar ice caps is increasing the levels of the seas across the planet. As a result, coastal flooding and land erosion is a real worry for those living on islands like Fiji, Hawaii, and the Mariana Islands. Activists from the area have come together to have their voices heard by the international community. They shout 'We are not drowning. We are fighting'. They want people from across the globe to change their lifestyles, realise that their actions have consequences and call on governments to change policy to protect the environment.

In November 2009 floods in Cockermouth, Cumbria, devastated the local area causing businesses, schools and homes to be closed for over a year. There had been a record amount of rainfall earlier on in the month, then on 19th November, a record amount of rain fell (316mm in one day). This in part was caused by the sea temperature around the Azores being 2-3°C above average, moistening the air which was then blown towards the UK. Because of the sloping surrounding area, and lack of trees to slow down the surface water runoff, the water soon gained depth and momentum. This was not helped by tarmacked and stoned roads as they are impermeable, so water carried on flowing, not able to be absorbed by the ground.

The flood water reached Cockermouth at a height of 2.5 meters costing £275 million in damages.



What can you do?

- Make green hearts this February. Wear what you have made, encourage your friends and family to do the same to show the world you care about climate justice.
- Give up eating meat one day a week.
- Use your left overs from the night before as a lunch or snack the next day.
- Give up single use plastic and opt for more sustainable items.
- Encourage others to live a more sustainable and simple lifestyle.
- Try your hand at gardening, grow your own fruit and veg!
- Join in with climate strikes happening across the UK and show your love for the planet.
- Get some ideas for action from our CST page on caring for our planet.

Supporting Students and Workers

Work fills us with dignity, it anoints us, strengthening our likeness to God who works.

Work is a gift from God to humanity. It makes us who we are. We are continuing in the footsteps of God when we work, building on the foundations made by God through creation. Each individual person can, and should, use their God given gifts to make the world a better place. Each person has the right to dignified work and the benefits of work, such as sick leave, maternity/paternity pay, adequate health care, retirement funds and the right to join a union. Employers have a responsibility to their workers, to treat them with respect, pay them fair wages and ensure they have clean and safe working conditions.



Because work is in fact a gift, we need to recognise that work exists for people, people don't exist for work. This can sometimes be forgotten when places of work are driven by profit, and don't look after the dignity of their workers. Zero-hour contracts, poor health and safety and unjust working hours all undermine the rights of the individual and need to be challenged.



In Laudato Si, Pope Francis highlights an issue that could become more of a problem in the future: technological advances. The mechanisation of production means that fewer people are needed for work, leading to more and more people becoming unemployed. Pope Francis says that "the goal should not be that technological progress increasingly replaces human work, for this would be detrimental to humanity." Individuals have the right to be able to work in order to lead a sustainable and dignified life.

For those who are unable to work because of issues like economic downturns, war, sickness, staff redundancies or their jobs being replaced by machines, financial help must be given; however, we should always strive to allow individuals a dignified life through work.

Our day to day lives are impacted by the work of others. Similarly, our lives and choices can affect the working conditions of others. Everyone has a responsibility to think about the products they buy and whether the workers producing the items have been treated fairly in their places of work.



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Growing cocoa beans is a hard job! The cocoa bean crop is very sensitive, needing to be protected from outside forces like too much sun, damaging insects, winds and disease. This means that the crops need a lot of time and energy from farmers to look after them, and for them to be good enough to sell. Sadly, the price that farmers receive for cocoa has halved since the 1980s, despite profits for the multinational chocolate companies increasing rapidly since this time. Often cocoa farmers receive just 6% of all the profits of chocolate sales, whereas companies can receive up to 70%!

In the UK some sports retailers have been in the media recently for the way they treat their employees. They have been accused of putting their profits before the safety and wellbeing of the staff they employ. Allegations of workers being docked pay for being 1 minute late, fearful of taking sick leave, and being offered only zero-hour contracts show that staff are not being treated as dignified workers. One report from an MP on a leading sports retailer claims that in some companies staff are not treated as humans.

2.7 million people in Britain are employed in the retail industry. However, increasingly shops are opting for self-service checkouts which require fewer workers. The Office for National Statistics estimates that if shops carry on cutting jobs because of technological advancements around 135 million cashier jobs will be lost, meaning that two thirds of cashiers are in danger of redundancies. This means that more

people will be forced to find other jobs or will not be able to provide for themselves through sustainable work.

What can you do?

- Lobby local and national businesses to stop zero hour contracts.
- Think more about where you buy clothes and food. Are those who produce the items you buy getting fair wages and working conditions? Can you buy items that are fairly produced and traded?
- Have a look at the health and safety procedures at work places near you, are the workers adequately protected from the dangers of work?
- Treat workers you encounter with respect. Whether or not you are having a bad day, the person at work is using their God given gifts-treat them with the dignity and respect each person deserves.
- Support those who cannot work, recognise their value.





Promoting Dignity and Equality

Each human being is beautifully and lovingly made in God's image.

Human dignity is the foundation for all of the principles of Catholic social teaching. Without the dignity of the human person the other principles fall apart. The idea that all humans have a God given dignity stems from Genesis, and the story of creation. In Genesis 1:24, God says: "Let us make humans in our image, after our likeness." By creating humans in God's image and likeness, humanity has the dignity of God, a theme that reoccurs many times throughout the bible.



As all humans have been made by God, we are all brothers and sisters and therefore have a duty to protect the dignity of each person. This idea of one human

family is reaffirmed in the New Testament in Galatians 3:28

"there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." We cannot treat people differently or unfairly because of where they come from, what their abilities are, who they know, their religious practices or the family they were born in to. A person's dignity is not earned. It is given from God.



In 1948 the United Nations compiled a document called the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'. This was the

first time in history that the dignity of each person had been acknowledged. It was an important shift towards acknowledging the fact that each person, made in God's image, has rights and needs to be treated equally and with dignity. In his letter 'Peace on Earth, Pope St John XXIII refers to the declaration as a 'step in the right direction' and a 'solemn recognition of the personal dignity of every human being; an assertion of everyone's right to be free to seek out the truth, to follow moral principles, discharge the duties imposed by justice, and lead a fully human life.'





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Colonisation is the taking over of one country by another in order to expand their territory, political control and access to resources. King Leopold II wanted a colony for Belgium as he desired historic and international political significance. In 1885 he established the Congo Free State, a colony owned by himself not Belgium, in order to have total control of its people and resources. The rights and dignity of the 20 million indigenous people were ignored for the sake of natural resource profits, mostly from ivory and rubber. Villages were burned down so that no one could hide from the colonial soldiers. Women and children were held hostage whilst the men of the village were forced to harvest rubber from trees. If not enough rubber was collected individuals would be whipped or killed, these people were thought of as not human. Instead they were enslaved and called savages, thought of as nothing more than uncivilised beasts. Those who colonised the Congo thought so little of the people whose land they had taken they believed the ammunition that they used against them to be more valuable than people's lives. In order to show they were not wasting bullets, the colonial soldiers had to bring back one severed hand for every bullet they fired. This led to people's hands being cut off who were still alive so that the superior officers would not think they had wasted bullets. These atrocities went on for several years before finally the rights of the indigenous people were recognised. However, as many as 10 million may have died in the time that King Leopold II ruled the Congo free state, almost half of the original population of the area.

Winterbourne View was a care home for patients with learning disabilities and autism located just outside of Bristol. In 2011 it was uncovered that there had been prolonged mistreatment of the residents in the home, including patients being slapped, harshly restrained, pinned to the floor with chairs, their hair being pulled, as well as encountering verbal abuse, being showered in cold water, and mouth wash being poured in one patient's eyes. One extreme example saw one patient being doused in cold water and left outside in near sub zero temperatures. One psychologist likened the treatment to torture. The clear disregard for the dignity of the patients they were supposed to be caring for listed were shown on a BBC Panorama programme exposing the abuse. It is believed that this treatment had been going on long before the perpetrators were exposed. There are now more provisions for

safeguarding the welfare of individuals with learning disabilities and autism in care homes like Winterbourne View. However, people with learning disabilities remain one of the groups that are the most likely to face abuse.

What can you do?

- Treat everyone you meet with the God given dignity that they deserve.
- Think about groups who are not necessarily treated with dignity, what can you do to help them?
- Get involved with human rights charities to ensure everyone rights are respected.
- Volunteer with a HCPT group going to Lourdes .





Standing for those in Poverty

By living out the option for the poor we can make real change to the lives of others.

As followers of Jesus, it is our duty to stand for those less fortunate than ourselves. God himself chose to come down to earth, not as a king or a rich man, but as a man from a poor family. God has a love for people who have the least as they are the most marginalised, most vulnerable and most forgotten in society. Poverty means much more than how much money a person has, it is also a question of access to what humans have a right to such as food, education, water that is clean and medicine. However, it goes further than material need. People who have no family or friends can also experience a type of poverty. Individuals too can be in poverty if they lack purpose in their life. Mother Teresa summarises this well by saying "We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty".



It is important to remember that God did not create poverty. Instead poverty is a result of injustice in the world, created by humans. Individuals and countries exploit others, taking what is not theirs, making unfair deals and taking advantage of those who have no choice but to comply. The gap between the rich and the poor is getting bigger as the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. This is shown in the UK where 44% of the wealth is owned by just 10% of the population, making it the fifth most unequal country in Europe.



Today, the world's richest 1% of people own 45% of the world's wealth. *Populorum Progressio*, an encyclical or letter by Pope St Paul VI, highlights the need for change not just within countries, but on this global scale. Writing in 1967, Pope Paul says "unless the existing machinery is modified, the disparity between rich and poor nations will increase rather than diminish; the rich nations are progressing with rapid strides while the poor nations move forward at a slow pace." This widening gap is something that we need to protect those in poverty against. It is our duty to share what we have with the poor, both locally and worldwide. St. Ambrose summarised this duty well when he said "You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor man, but you are giving him back what is his. You have been appropriating things that are meant to be for the common use of everyone. The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich." It is the duty of those who are able to fight for the rights of those who are poor, and ensure their voices are heard. Promoting the equality of everyone on earth, addressing their immediate needs, but also challenging the systems and people who are causing poverty.



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Examples

Countries such as Brazil have millions of people living in poverty. In order to find economic prosperity, people (often young people) leave their family and their villages, heading to the cities in order to earn money through working in factories. This leaves their family and community without help at home or if they are farmers, help on the farm. Villages in areas like Caatinga, north west Brazil are left without strong capable individuals to help out in the community, forcing families into further poverty. Those who do leave head to large cities like São Paulo in the hopes of finding a job. Many jobs, such as those in drinks factories, pay low wages and require long working hours. As a result people are forced to make their own houses where they can, often on the outskirts of the city, in order to have a place to sleep. These favelas are overcrowded, diseased and unsanitary places to live, but for most people it is their only way of affording to live. Both those who stay and those who leave, experience great poverty with little or no hope of escape. Poverty is a relative term. People in Britain can experience poverty, too, despite living in one of the richest nations in the world. In the UK 19% of people are considered to be in absolute poverty. People in absolute poverty can be destitute, unable to afford to eat or keep warm in their homes, and can come to rely on loans with high interest rates. It is easy to assume that those in poverty in Britain are so because they don't have a job. However, higher costs of living, unreliable working patterns and low paid jobs mean that people who work can still be in poverty. 57% of people living in poverty in the UK are in households where at least one person works. Poverty is also a big issue for single parents (who are twice as likely to be in poverty), and families with more than one child. It is believed that approximately 3.7 million children are in poverty in Britain. Food bank charities like the Trussell Trust say that record numbers people are in need of help with 1.6m food bank parcels given to people between 2018 and 2019 alone.

Poverty concerns more than just a person's material possessions. People can experience moral poverty and poverty of the spirit, not just material poverty. Loneliness in Britain is becoming an increasing issue, with some people referring to this issue as a loneliness epidemic. Age UK estimated that in 2016 there were 1.2 million chronically lonely older people in the UK. However, it is not just elderly people who are lonely, The Red Cross believes that 9 million people of all ages in the UK are often or always lonely. Social media has played a part in recent years, as people are swapping physical and genuine relationships with quick interactions online and via the phone. Poverty is wide spread across the world and can take different forms, be it physical, material or psychological.

What can you do?

- Treat everyone you meet with love and care, they are the face of Christ.
- Visit people you think may be feeling lonely, check up on them every once in a while.
- Donate food to the local food bank.
- Challenge your family and friends negative views on poverty.
- Write a blog or article on poverty .





Building Solidarity and Peace

Peace is much more than the absence of war; it is the fullness of life for all.

The ideas of peace and solidarity are deeply intertwined. Solidarity reaffirms the idea that humans are called to live in community with each other, coming together for the common good, upholding the dignity of every human. Solidarity is an expression of our interconnectedness. We are all brothers and sisters. Being in solidarity is not just, for example, feeling sorry for others but feeling their pain ourselves and acting for the good of others.

Solidarity requires peace. When there is a lack of peace, there is no solidarity. We cannot pretend to live in solidarity with one another when

there is conflict, action must be taken to reaffirm solidarity and resolve issues to create peace. In 'The Joy of the Gospel', Pope Francis outlines his belief that the term solidarity is "little worn and at times poorly understood, but it refers to something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity. It presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few."



Peace is a combination of nonviolence and justice. The unity of these two ideas come together in the Hebrew word 'Shalom'. There cannot be peace if there is no justice, instead that becomes an oppressive, forced regime where people's rights are ignored for the sake of pacification. Similarly, where there is violence there can be no peace, as from violence injustice occurs. Wars are often a result of people's rights being cast aside, exploitation of individuals or greed creating poverty. Solidarity with one another enables peace to flow.



Each person, animal and plant has been created by God, meaning we are all connected together, living with one another in solidarity.

This bond allows us to feel a responsibility to care for each other, but it goes much deeper than this. We are connected through God's love and the mission of Christ, called to use our own gifts to ensure this solidarity is maintained and everyone is treated with dignity. The pursuit of peace is jeopardised when a person's right to human dignity is taken away. Pope Paul VI said, 'if you want peace, work for justice'. It is the job of every single person to work for peace, standing in solidarity with those whose dignity has been taken away. Governments have a duty to work for peace, they can do this by defending the rights of people both in their own country and across the world. We are a global community, connected more than we ever have been with media and the internet. Because of this, we have a responsibility to participate in our communities and a responsibility to help our brothers and sisters across the world. We cannot be oblivious to the sufferings of others.



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Apartheid is a system where people are separated according to their race. They are treated differently, given unequal opportunities, and often are restricted in who they are allowed to associate with and marry. In South Africa, the official apartheid regime lasted from 1948 to the early 1990's, although there had been much racial segregation and discrimination before then. Treating people negatively because of their race is dismissing their human dignity and failing to recognise that everyone is created and loved by God equally. This violation of human rights, and break down of solidarity, jeopardised peace in South Africa. Acts of violence against the oppressors and those who were oppressed occurred, however most of the casualties were felt by the black community. Two years after apartheid ended in South Africa the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established. The aim was to help the country move on peacefully, whilst still bringing justice to those who had been wronged. Victims of human rights violations were called forward to give statements, and those who perpetrated the crimes were also heard from in exchange for amnesty or lighter sentences for their crimes. This allowed for more information to be gleaned about the events that had occurred than normal justice systems, as those on trial don't always fully disclose their crimes, in order to receive a lighter sentence. Being able to fully disclose crimes without fear of harsher sentences meant that people were able to find out truthfully what happened to their friends and relatives, helping to build a more peaceful community in the country moving forward.

2018 saw a record number of people displaced from their homes. 70.8 million people were forced to flee from their home because of conflict and persecution, 30 million of which crossed a border to another country in order to find safety. Those who enter into other countries to escape danger are referred to as refugees. Half of all refugees are children. People have been crossing borders for centuries. There is often a negative stigma against refugees, with countries believing them to be a drain on resources, and a danger to their people. The value of each human person is forgotten, and no sense of solidarity is felt towards those who are displaced from their own countries.

The cold war was a tension between the world's superpowers of the time the United States of America and the Soviet Union, that lasted between 1947 and 1991. It is often referred to as the time of 'long peace' because it is the longest time since the rule of the Roman Empire that the world's most influential countries have not been at war.

However, there are some questions over whether this can really be described as peace because of the presence of nuclear weapons. If one country launched its nuclear weapons, then there would have been Mutually Assured Destruction. It was this threat of MAD that kept the world's superpowers at 'peace' during this time, not solidarity, a pledge for nonviolence, or the pursuit of justice. Many countries today still have nuclear weapons and use the threat of Mutually Assured Destruction as leverage, and a deterrent against warfare. Many faith groups

see these threats as non-just and non-peaceful and many individuals and organisations continue to campaign for nuclear disarmament today.

What can you do?

- Choose to forgive those who you feel have done you wrong, harbour feelings of peace instead of vengeance.

- Stand in solidarity with refugees.

Educate others and yourself on the plight that refugees often face when fleeing their country.

- Organise your own mini vigil on peace and disarmament. Take time to reflect.

- Get some ideas for action from our CST page on building solidarity and peace.

