

the context

FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Catholic schools play a vital role in promoting and sharing the substance and values of Catholic social teaching. Just as the social mission of the Church is central to the practice of Christian witness and discipleship, so the core dimensions of social teaching – justice, mercy and love – are integral to Catholic education. They must not be treated as tangential or optional, but as a core element of educational and catechetical programs and formative experiences. Catholic social teaching should underpin all major policies, programs and practices, enabling all members of the community to:

- + reflect on the connection between their Christian faith, worship and justice
- + understand and articulate the core principles of Catholic social teaching
- + be familiar with key Church teachings, and the Biblical roots, related to social mission
- + recognise the sacredness of human life
- + know what the virtue of justice entails
- + recognise and identify social justice problems within local and global contexts
- + identify and articulate the causes and scope of these social justice problems
- + reflect on how they as individual Christians can respond to these issues
- + be familiar with, and practise, the methodology of 'see, judge, act'
- + exercise and experience love, mercy and compassion
- + be committed to making a 'difference in our world'.

“Anyone who sets off on the path of doing good to others is already drawing near to God, is already sustained by his help, for it is characteristic of the divine light to brighten our eyes whenever we walk towards the fullness of love.”

POPE FRANCIS
LUMEN FIDEI, N 35

Schools can:

- + embed the anthropology and principles of Catholic social teaching appropriately within teaching/learning programs
- + promote the regular use of the Compendium on the Social Doctrine of the Church by both students and staff
- + establish age-appropriate action and advocacy groups
- + facilitate opportunities for reflection on and responses to the Annual Social Justice Statement and its related themes
- + promote and support teacher participation in immersion experiences
- + prepare, train and engage students in age-appropriate mission experiences
- + facilitate opportunities for participants to share their experiences of social outreach
- + establish partnerships with local schools or Church agencies on justice projects
- + establish a partnership with a school in a remote or disadvantaged area
- + develop an annual calendar so as to promote significant events and anniversaries that acknowledge and celebrate particular aspects of Catholic Social Teaching
- + create online learning communities for the purpose of raising awareness, sharing resources and empowering 'Catholic voices'
- + support the diverse mission and outreach works of founding Religious Orders
- + identify principles of Catholic Social Teaching particularly relevant to their community and consider and adopt appropriate responses in light of the methodology of 'see, judge, act'.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR supporting charities

Catholic schools have an enviable record in and a deep commitment to supporting a range of charitable organisations. It is important that this service to others is informed and guided by the key principles of Catholic social teaching, and that due consideration is given to the competing needs of different groups and organisations.

Schools should:

- + give priority to Catholic organisations and agencies, especially Caritas Australia, Catholic Mission, CatholicCare, St Vincent de Paul and the Archdiocesan Charitable Works Fund. Particular support should also be given to Religious Congregations, involved in works of welfare, mission, outreach and advocacy
- + establish and promote alternatives to fundraising, enabling opportunities for advocacy, awareness-raising and volunteer work
- + be sensitive to the purpose and function of the Catholic Education Foundation when providing support for external charities
- + investigate the philosophy, mission and known practices of non-Catholic charitable organisations so as to avoid those that hold positions contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church
- + develop a strategic approach to mission and outreach, providing a balanced and appropriate response to local needs and national and international causes. Charitable commitments should be carefully planned on an annual basis so as to ensure that communities are not over-burdened
- + facilitate opportunities for education and formation so that fundraising and social outreach do not occur in isolation, but are experienced and viewed within the full context of the Christian tradition
- + consider carefully the need to support 'high profile' campaigns which already receive significant community and, in some instances, government support
- + encourage rather than oblige students to participate in, or contribute to, fundraising, volunteer work, advocacy, dialogue, etc., as a means of social outreach. This should always be voluntary.
- + operate with total transparency in the support of charities, especially where fundraising is involved. All members of the community should be made aware of the purpose and processes of any monetary collection, and advised of the final amount contributed
- + review periodically their support of charities and engagement in social outreach. This evaluation should include an examination of how monies/resources are utilised by beneficiaries, and the balance and sustainability of the levels of support.

“Catholic organisations should not limit themselves merely to collecting and distributing funds, but should show special concern for individuals in need and exercise a valuable educational function within the Christian community, helping people to appreciate the importance of sharing, respect and love in the spirit of the Gospel of Christ.”

POPE BENEDICT XVI
ON THE SERVICE OF CHARITY

catholic social teaching

A FRAMEWORK FOR FAITH IN ACTION

catholic social teaching

“Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society.”

POPE FRANCIS
EVANGELII GAUDIUM, N 187

With the proclamation of the Word of God and the celebration of the Sacraments, the social mission of the Church is at the heart of our faith. It is founded on the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ, who came “to bring good news to the poor...release to captives...recovery of sight to the blind” (Lk 4:18-19), and who identified himself with “the least of these,” the hungry, the thirsty and the stranger (cf Mt 25:45).

This mission to serve “the least of these” is the responsibility of every baptised person. It is an indispensable expression of our Christian discipleship. Our faith calls us to respect the dignity of every person, promote and protect human rights – especially life – pursue peace, work for justice, promote mercy and compassion, and seek the common good. This is the commission of Jesus, the call of the Gospels, the challenge of the Prophets and the living tradition of the Church.

Catholic social teaching is underpinned by our understanding that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27) and is redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore has inherent human dignity, is invaluable and is worthy of respect. We are created in the image of God’s communal and relational nature (Trinity) and are called to share in this social nature by loving our neighbour, “a path that leads to the encounter with God” (Deus Caritas Est n 16). It is from this anthropology that the principles of Catholic social teaching are drawn.

Although the Church’s social teaching has been developed within the context of the Catholic tradition, it offers moral principles and great truths that resonate with people of all faith traditions. Drawn from Biblical foundations, it is concerned with every facet of human life – social, cultural, educational, economic and political – and it provides a framework for the integral growth of all people. Pope Paul VI described this as ‘authentic development’, for “in order to be authentic, it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every person and of the whole person” (Populorum Progressio n 14).

Catholic social teaching has been articulated through a tradition of papal and conciliar documents that explore and express the social demands of our faith. It provides a systematic moral framework which is underpinned by foundational principles that affirm fundamental truths, give moral guidance and offer ethical criteria for ‘faith in action’. The social mission of the Church offers a vision for a more just and equitable society and is highly regarded by people from a diversity of social, cultural and religious backgrounds.

“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people 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.”

POPE PAUL VI
GAUDIUM ET SPES, N 1



the key themes

OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Flowing from the fundamental anthropology, Catholic social teaching is centred upon several core principles which are deemed as necessary to creating an environment conducive to people’s authentic development, and their realisation of a ‘fullness of life’ (cf Jn 10:10). Underpinning the entire vision of this teaching is an awareness of the unique dignity of the human person, made in the image and likeness of God. It is from this ‘bedrock principle’ that all other principles and rights proceed.

- 1 The Dignity of the Human Person**
Every human being is created in God’s image and likeness and therefore is valuable and worthy of respect.
- 2 Respect for Human Life**
Human life at every stage of development, from conception to natural death, is precious and thus worthy of protection and respect.
- 3 The Right of Association**
Human beings are social; therefore they grow and achieve fulfilment by association with others in families and other social institutions.
- 4 The Principle of Participation**
People have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good of all.
- 5 A Preferential Option for the Poor**
The Gospels call us to place the needs of the poor and vulnerable first, so that their needs as well as the common good may be realised.
- 6 The Principle of Solidarity**
We are one human family, and so our practise of love of neighbour must extend to the whole global community.
- 7 Stewardship**
We show our respect for the Creator by our responsible use and protection of all of creation, from the use of personal talents and resources to caring for the environment.
- 8 The Principle of Subsidiarity**
While government has a proper role in promoting the common good, wherever possible decisions should be made by those who are closest to the people who will be affected by them, consistent with the decisions being well made.
- 9 Human Equality**
The equality of persons is a matter of their essential human dignity; social and cultural discrimination is not compatible with our understanding that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God.
- 10 The Common Good**
The common good requires that social conditions allow all people to reach their full human potential and realise their human dignity.

(Fr William Byron, SJ. Ten building blocks of Catholic Social Teaching, 1998)

LOOKING INTO THE signs of the times BY THE light of faith

SEE

JUDGE

ACT

Catholic social teaching has been described as ‘faith in action’, a way of reflecting upon and responding to the call of Jesus as it relates to contemporary society. The Church’s social mission consists of:

- + principles for reflection
- + criteria for judgement
- + guidelines for action.

In ‘Mater et Magistra’, Pope John XXIII affirmed the methodology of See, Judge, Act developed by Cardinal Cardijn as a way of reading and responding to the signs and needs of the times:

There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgement on it in the light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what in the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: observe, judge act.

Pope John XXIII. Mater et Magistra, n. 236