

Nottingham Roman Catholic
Diocesan Education Service



WHAT IS
CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING?

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

November 2025

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1 Introduction

This document is the third in a suite of documents and resources offered as a tool for those who lead and govern our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Nottingham to assist them in ensuring that the Catholic nature of the school remains at the heart of its mission.

It has been produced using materials from the NRCDES course of the same name among others, at the request of colleagues who have found focus and discussion on Catholic social teaching to have had a profound effect on what is done, and how, in relation to the all-important Catholic Life and Mission of our schools.

We often hear the term, 'Catholic Social Teaching', or CST, but what exactly do we mean by this? Is our understanding of the term shared by others? As Catholic school leaders, our greatest responsibility is to prioritise the Catholicity of the school and to seek to continually promote and develop it. Additionally, local governors have a duty to ensure that our schools are faithful to their mission; they are asked to engage with school leaders in the monitoring and evaluation of Catholic Life and Mission, which is where we will find the evidence and impact of any work linked to Catholic social teaching.

My hope is that this resource will assist all of us in our respective roles to ensure that our schools are indeed true to their mission of making Jesus Christ known and loved and that, through this ever-deepening encounter with him, and by providing practical support to others, near and far, we may bring his message of love and hope to a world which is so much in need.

Within the Diocese of Nottingham, if we embrace Bishop Patrick's spiritual themes of Encounter, Discipleship and Missionary Discipleship (see *Appendix 3*), we will be living out not only the Catholic social teaching principles explored in this document, but also our bishop's own motto, to 'seek the face of Christ' in others and, in turn, be the face of Christ to those whom we meet. On behalf of Bishop Patrick McKinney, I offer you my sincere thanks for your continued commitment to Catholic education in the Diocese of Nottingham.

Peter Giorgio

Director of Education

2 What is Catholic School Teaching?

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me'.

Matthew 25:40

Catholic social teaching is rooted in sacred Scripture, the teaching of the Church, natural law and our own experience of the world. It is rooted most deeply in the values of the Gospel. It is from its roots in love that the fundamental social values of truth, freedom and justice are born and grow (*Compendium*, 205). From these values come the principles to guide the building of a society worthy of human beings. Catholic social teaching is primarily concerned with how we live together in society, the rightness of our relations with each other, and is especially concerned with people who are not thriving due to unjust relationships, or a lack of the resources due to them. This is the preferential option for the poor, which is God's option.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

Matthew 22:37–39

These values of the Gospel, the fundamental reference points of the renewal of the social order - love, justice, truth and freedom - also require the personal exercise of virtue. Catholic social teaching is nothing without action. It is an invitation to be loving, to do justice in the world. The primary (human) virtue we are asked to learn and cultivate is prudence, in other words practical wisdom in action. Prudence seeks to understand the concrete situation as widely and deeply as possible and to discern in the light of the Gospel what needs to be done to build up the Kingdom of God. In Catholic social teaching this becomes the 'See-Judge-Act' method, promoted by Pope St John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* (1961). This practical framework enables us to applying Catholic social teaching to real-life situations.

See

Observe and understand the reality.

Look closely at the social situation - gather facts, identify problems, and listen to the experiences of those affected, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Judge

Reflect using faith and reason.

Evaluate the situation in light of the **Gospel, Church teachings, and moral principles**. Ask: *Is this situation just? Does it respect human dignity and the common good?*

Act

Take concrete action for change.

Respond with informed and compassionate action to improve the situation - whether through personal choices, community efforts, advocacy, or systemic change.

This method empowers individuals and communities to live out their faith through justice, compassion, and social responsibility.

Catholic social teaching (CST) is a phrase or term which is in increasingly common use, and with which we are becoming increasingly familiar. There is a body of understanding around what it means, rather than a specific definition. Over the years, successive papal writings, or encyclicals, have encouraged and reminded us about our social and moral responsibilities towards other people and the environment, in recognition of God's gifts to us, his people.

In essence, CST refers to the political, social and economic issues in the world today – and our reaction and action linked to these matters in light of the faith we hold.

As Catholics, we do not have a monopoly on charity and good deeds: all good, caring and loving people have the opportunity to think about and help others, in just the same way as we may give assistance ourselves. But it is the conviction we have, out of the faith we hold, which gives us an impetus to make changes for the better.

*He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the
Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk
humbly with your God?*

Micah 6:8

Within this understanding, CST allows us to draw from scripture, from the example of Jesus, to create in us a need to 'do something' – and 'the something we do' is how we reflect and live out our faith in an overt and proactive way. Jesus' instruction to, 'love your neighbour as yourself' (*Mark 12:31* and *Matthew 22:39*) is at the heart of how Catholics believe they should participate in their community and the wider world. Subsequently, if we want our pupils to grow up to understand the world better, and the injustice within it, CST can equip them – and us – to make a difference.

3 Catholic Social Teaching: 19th Century Onwards ...



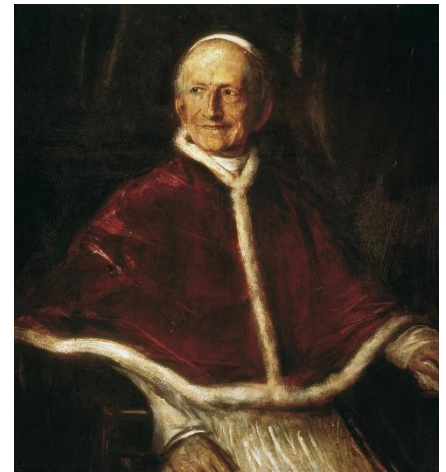
*Cardinal Henry Edward Manning
by George Frederic Watts
Oil on canvas, 1882
The National Portrait Gallery*

In England, Cardinal Manning intervened in the London dockers' strike in 1889. He was from a wealthy background, so the owners listened to him. He was a prince of the Church, so the Irish dockers looked up to him.

The leadership of the Church in the nineteenth century was mostly on the side of established power, perhaps in understandable reaction to the traumas of the French Revolution. The Church was very nervous about social reform and sided with the forces of hierarchy and conservatism. Cardinal Manning broke out of this in spectacular fashion when he turned on the owners in the dock strike and condemned the misery they were causing by refusing to negotiate in the strike, which he said was 'not a private affair; it is a public evil'. The strike ended with better conditions for the dockers.

Reports were feeding back to Rome about these and similar movements in France and Germany. Pope Leo XIII, an aristocratic himself, struck a match and, so to speak, 'lit the fuse' of CST which would explode on 15 May 1891 with the publication of *Rerum Novarum* (On Capital and Labour), the first social encyclical. The major theme of the document, and indeed of all that followed, was the protection and promotion of the dignity of the human person: 'No man may with impunity outrage that human dignity which God Himself treats with great reverence'.

The explosions have been going off in the Vatican periodically ever since, initially after long gaps but increasingly more often, and louder. The social encyclicals of the popes, from Leo XIII to Francis and Leo XIV, read the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel and encourage action to build a more just and compassionate world.



*Pope Leo XIII by Franz Seraph
Von Lenbach*

4 Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and Catholic School Inspection (CSI)

The Catholic Schools Inspection (CSI) framework evaluates the quality of Catholic Life and Mission, Religious Education (RE), and Collective Worship in Catholic schools, considering each area in terms of pupil outcomes, provision, and leadership and governance. The inspection process, and the materials used to support schools in meeting the requirements set out by the Catholic Education Service (CES) on behalf of the Bishops of England and Wales, check and celebrate the ways in which schools uphold the vision and teachings of the Catholic Church.

For more information about the schedule and related documents, visit the Catholic Schools Inspectorate website: [Inspection documents | Catholic Schools Inspectorate](#)

With the introduction of this new, nationally recognised *Catholic Schools Inspection Framework* in England and Wales from September 2022, the dynamite of CST has been delivered to our Catholic schools in new way. Unsurprisingly, CST features in the grade descriptors found within the framework, enabling all stakeholders to self-assess how effectively CST principles shape and have impact upon the decision making, principles and practices of the school. The *inspection handbook* also assists stakeholders in school improvement planning, helping school leaders to set out developmental aims and objectives.

The following references to CST have been taken from the 'outstanding' criteria of the Catholic Life and Mission section of the *inspection handbook*, illustrating what CST 'can look like' in the most effective schools:

CLM1.4 (Pupil Outcomes)

Pupils take a leading role in responding to the demands of Catholic social teaching and are proactive in finding ways of responding, locally, nationally, and globally. They can clearly articulate the theology underpinning their actions.

CLM3.5 (Leadership)

Leaders and governors are inspirational witnesses to the Gospel and to Catholic social teaching in their direction of the school at every level. They embody the Church's preferential option for the poor by ensuring that resources are consciously and effectively targeted at those in greatest need, both materially and educationally. In every one of their decisions, they demonstrate an

exemplary commitment to care for our common home, to the pursuit of the common good and to service of those in greatest need.

The following points have been taken from the 'outstanding' criteria of the Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship (CW) sections. Here, Catholic social teaching principles are implied in the text, linking knowledge and understanding of ethics, theology and community with being a community of faith which acts in response to need, near and far.

RE1.3 (Pupil Outcomes)

Pupils, relative to their age and capacity, are religiously literate and engaged young people; they use their knowledge, understanding and skills effectively, to reflect spiritually, and to think ethically and theologically. As a consequence, they are particularly aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life.

RE2.6 (Provision)

Teachers have a profound understanding of the impact religious education has on the moral and spiritual development of pupils and their ability to meaningfully make sense of their experience of the world. Therefore, teachers give pupils space and time for purposeful reflection in lessons

RE3.7 (Leadership)

Excellent links are forged with other appropriate agencies and the wider community to provide a wide range of enrichment activities to promote pupils' learning and engagement with religious education.

CW1.5 (Pupil Outcomes)

Pupils readily reflect on their experience of prayer and liturgy with confidence and in detail. They can clearly articulate the ways in which these experiences have shaped how they think about themselves and the world and how this has inspired them to action.

5 Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

The Catholic values we teach within our schools apply to us all. The following values outline how the Church's teachings can shape our attitudes, demeanour, decision-making and relationships in our daily lives – all of which are helpful to us in our work.

The permanent principles of CST link our divine origins with our eternal destiny. They help us to root our thoughts and actions in the values Jesus taught us by his own example and words. Though different organisations may highlight certain CST principles, or use alternative terminology to outline how CST can be lived out, here is an overview of the fundamental values we need to absorb and exemplify:

Dignity

Everyone is loved and capable of love; right to life; human rights and duties; dignity of workers; right to the goods of the earth.

Solidarity

Think of the needs of others; all are responsible for all; one human family; service; work for justice.

Subsidiarity

Everyone has a say, especially the marginalised; participation; associations and groups; decisions at lowest level possible, highest level necessary.

Care for our Common Home

Conversion of heart; cry of the earth, cry of the poor; integral ecology; live simply; education; stewardship; divestment.

Common Good

Flourishing of all; preferential option for the poor; family; responsibility; community; discernment; social justice; peace; civilisation of love.

6 CAFOD's Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (**CAFOD**) has outlined a useful set of principles within CST, all of which we can weave into our own lives and into the lives of our pupils and schools. Much of our charity and community work, near and far, is as a direct link of responding to the call to take action, as people of faith.

The **CAFOD** website contains a wealth of materials for schools, and others, to use and enjoy. **CAFOD** highlights and defines its CST principles in a simple way, as follows:

- **Stewardship of Creation** - caring for God's gifts
- **Participation** - taking part
- **Human Dignity** - everyone is special
- **Option for the Poor** - putting people in most need first
- **The Common Good** - thinking of everyone
- **Solidarity** - showing we care
- **Subsidiarity** - everyone should have a say
- **Distributive Justice** - sharing fairly
- **Promoting Peace** - being peacemakers

CAFOD's PowerPoint presentations, posters, films, and materials are tailor-made for use across all key stages when exploring CST.

[Catholic Social Teaching resources for children](#)

[Catholic Social Teaching for secondary schools](#)

[Films for GCSE RE](#)

[CST and RE films](#)

7 Missio – the Pope’s Charity for World Mission

On its website, **Missio** explains that their charity work, ‘ignites God’s love by helping local missionaries to work alongside global communities that are poor or in need, regardless of their background or belief.

‘Sometimes, this need might be very specific: a motorbike for a priest to celebrate Mass in remote villages; a simple community hall so people can gather together; vaccinations to protect vulnerable children. Whatever our missionaries need to help them share the joy of the Gospel, **Missio** strives to provide it.’

Mission Together is the children’s branch of **Missio**. For over 170 years Mission Together has helped children follow Jesus’ example, by encouraging prayer, fundraising and inspiring children to become missionaries themselves.

Their resources for Catholic primary schools incorporate scripture, prayer, reflection, and a call to action.

[Catholic Social Teaching - Missio](#)

Appendix 1 – Further Reading on CST

Rerum Novarum – On Capital and Labour

[**Rerum Novarum \(15 May, 1891\)**](#)

Pope Leo XIII, 1891

Educating Together in Catholic Schools

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007

Laudato Si – On Care for our Common Home

[**Laudato si' \(24 May 2015\)**](#)

Pope Francis, 2015

DOCAT: What to do?

Ignatius Press, 2016

Educating to Fraternal Humanism: Building a Civilisation of Love

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2017

Gospel Values for Catholic Schools: a practical guide for today

Raymond Friel, 2017

The Identity of a Catholic School

[**Instruction "The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue \(25 January 2022\)**](#)

Congregation for Catholic Education, 2022

Catholic Social Teaching: an introduction for schools, parishes and charities

Raymond Friel, 2023

Appendix 2 – A Prayer Reflecting CST

God of abundance,
you entrust to our care
your gift of creation,
our common home.
Open our ears to hear
the cry of the earth
and the cry of the poor.
God of justice,
you show us how to live in
gratitude and solidarity.
Open our mouths to speak out,
challenging greed and inequality,
and standing up for all among us
in desperate need of food.
God of hope,
you share with us your vision
of a world renewed.
Open our hearts to compassion.
As we hold before you
the people across our world,
may we reach out in love.
Amen.

Appendix 3 – Bishop Patrick's Spiritual Themes



Appendix 4 – Selected Church Quotations on CST

As regards the State, the interests of all, whether high or low, are equal. The members of the working classes are citizens by nature and by the same right as the rich; they are real parts, living the life which makes up, through the family, the body of the commonwealth; and it need hardly be said that they are in every city very largely in the majority. It would be irrational to neglect one portion of the citizens and favour another, and therefore the public administration must duly and solicitously provide for the welfare and the comfort of the working classes; otherwise, that law of justice will be violated which ordains that each man shall have his due.

Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), 33

No man may with impunity outrage that human dignity which God Himself treats with great reverence, nor stand in the way of that higher life which is the preparation of the eternal life of heaven.

Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), 40

To each, therefore, must be given his own share of goods, and the distribution of created goods, which, as every discerning person knows, is labouring today under the gravest evils due to the huge disparity between the few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered property less, must be effectively called back to and brought into conformity with the norms of the common good, that is, social justice.

Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), 58

Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them.

Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), 79

Labour, as Our Predecessor explained well in his Encyclical, is not a mere commodity. On the contrary, the worker's human dignity in it must be recognized. It therefore cannot be bought and sold like a commodity.

Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), 80

The permanent validity of the Catholic Church's social teaching admits of no doubt. This teaching rests on one basic principle: individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution. That is necessarily so, for men are by nature social beings. This fact must be recognized, as also the fact that they are raised in the plan of Providence to an order of reality which is above nature.

On this basic principle, which guarantees the sacred dignity of the individual, the Church constructs her social teaching. She has formulated, particularly over the past hundred years, and through the efforts of a very well-informed body of priests and laymen, a social doctrine which points out with clarity the sure way to social reconstruction. The principles she gives are of universal application, for they take human nature into account, and the varying conditions in which man's life is lived. They also take into account the principal characteristics of contemporary society, and are thus acceptable to all.

Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (1961), 218-220

It is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. And this is particularly true of the Church's social doctrine, the light of which is Truth, Justice its objective, and Love its driving force.

Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (1961), 226

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 judgment 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: look, judge, act.

It is important for our young people to grasp this method and to practice it. Knowledge acquired in this way does not remain merely abstract, but is seen as something that must be translated into action.

Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (1961), 236-237

Man has the right to live. He has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services. In consequence, he has the right to be looked after in the event of ill health; disability stemming from his work; widowhood; old age; enforced unemployment; or whenever through no fault of his own he is deprived of the means of livelihood.

Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (1963), 11

This faith needs to prove its fruitfulness by penetrating the believer's entire life, including its worldly dimensions, and by activating him toward justice and love, especially regarding the needy.

Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes (1965), 21

There is a growing awareness of the exalted dignity proper to the human person, since they stand above all things, and their rights and duties are universal and inviolable. Therefore, there must be made available to all people everything necessary for leading a truly human life, such as food, clothing, and shelter; the right to choose a state of life freely and to found a family, the right to education, to employment, to a good reputation, to respect, to appropriate information, to activity in accord with the upright norm of one's own conscience, to protection of privacy and rightful freedom...

Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes (1965), 26

Every day human interdependence grows more tightly drawn and spreads by degrees over the whole world. As a result the common good, that is, the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race.

Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes (1965), 26

...the leaven of the gospel...stimulates in the human heart the irresistible demands of dignity.

Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes (1965), 26

This social order requires constant improvement. It must be founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love; in freedom it should grow every day toward a more humane balance. An improvement in attitudes and abundant changes in society will have to take place if these objectives are to be gained.

Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, 26

God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner.

Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes (1965), 69

Whoever in obedience to Christ seeks first the Kingdom of God, takes therefrom a stronger and purer love for helping all his brethren and for perfecting the work of justice under the inspiration of charity.

Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), 72

In the developing nations and in other countries lay people must consider it their task to improve the temporal order. While the hierarchy has the role of teaching and authoritatively interpreting the moral laws and precepts that apply in this matter, the laity have the duty of using their own initiative and taking action in this area—without waiting passively for directives and precepts from others. They must try to infuse a Christian spirit into people's mental outlook and daily behaviour, into the laws and structures of the civil community. Changes must be made; present conditions must be improved. And the transformations must be permeated with the spirit of the Gospel.

Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), 81

It is up to the Christian communities to analyse with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church....It is up to these Christian communities, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the bishops who hold responsibility and in dialogue with other Christian brethren and all men of goodwill, to discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political and economic changes seen in many cases to be urgently needed.

Pope Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971), 4

Action for justice and participation in the transformation of the world clearly appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, which is to say, of the mission of the Church, in favour of the redemption and liberation of the human race from all oppressive situations.

Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World* (1971)

Faith in Christ, Son of God and Redeemer, and love of neighbour constitute a fundamental theme of the New Testament writings. According to St. Paul, the Christian life is summed up entirely in the faith that brings about that love and that service of neighbour which implies the observance of the rights of justice. The Christian lives under the law of interior freedom, that is, in a permanent call to conversion of heart, from human self-sufficiency to trust in God and from his selfishness to the sincere love of

neighbour. This is how his authentic liberation and the gift of himself for the liberation of men take place.

Synod of Bishops, Justice in the World (1971)

In order to achieve social justice in the various parts of the world, in the various countries, and in the relationships between them, there is a need for ever new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers. This solidarity must be present whenever it is called for by the social degrading of the subject of work, by exploitation of the workers, and by the growing areas of poverty and even hunger. The Church is firmly committed to this cause, for she considers it her mission, her service, a proof of her fidelity to Christ, so that she can truly be the 'Church of the poor'.

Pope John Paul II, Laborem Exercens (1981), 8

When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a "virtue," is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all. This determination is based on the solid conviction that what is hindering full development is that desire for profit and that thirst for power already mentioned. These attitudes and "structures of sin" are only conquered - presupposing the help of divine grace - by a diametrically opposed attitude: a commitment to the good of one's neighbour with the readiness, in the gospel sense, to "lose oneself" for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to "serve him" instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage (cf. Mt 10:40-42; 20:25; Mk 10:42-45; Lk 22:25-27).

Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987), 38

The teaching and spreading of her social doctrine are part of the Church's evangelizing mission. And since it is a doctrine aimed at guiding people's behaviour, it consequently gives rise to a 'commitment to justice', according to each individual's role, vocation and circumstances.

Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987), 41

At stake is the dignity of the human person, whose defence and promotion have been entrusted to us by the Creator, and to whom the men and women at every moment of history are strictly and responsibly in debt.

Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987), 47

It is appropriate to emphasize the preeminent role that belongs to the laity, both men and women, as was reaffirmed in the recent Assembly of the Synod. It is their task to animate temporal realities with Christian commitment, by which they show that they are witnesses and agents of peace and justice.

Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987), 47

...the main thread and, in a certain sense, the guiding principle of Pope Leo's Encyclical, and of all of the Church's social doctrine, is a correct view of the human person and of his unique value, inasmuch as "man ... is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself". God has imprinted his own image and likeness on man (cf. Gen 1:26), conferring upon him an incomparable dignity, as the Encyclical frequently insists. In effect, beyond the rights which man acquires by his own work, there exist rights which do not correspond to any work he performs, but which flow from his essential dignity as a person.

Pope John II, Centesimus Annus (1991), 11

Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice.

Pope John Paul II, Centesimus Annus (1991), 58

The Christian's programme —the programme of the Good Samaritan, the programme of Jesus—is 'a heart which sees'. This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly.

Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est (2005), 4

We are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity. They need heartfelt concern. Those who work for the Church's charitable organizations must be distinguished by the fact that they do not merely meet the needs of the moment, but they dedicate themselves to others with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experience the richness of their humanity. Consequently, in addition to their necessary professional training, these charity workers need a "formation of the heart": they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others. As a result, love of neighbour will no longer be for them a commandment imposed, so to speak, from without, but a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love (cf. Gal 5:6).

Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est (2005), 31

Charity is at the heart of the Church's social doctrine. Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36- 40). It gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbour; it is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones). For the Church, instructed by the Gospel, charity is everything because, as Saint John teaches (cf. 1 Jn 4:8, 16) and as I recalled in my first encyclical letter "God is love" (Deus Caritas Est): everything has its origin in God's love, everything is shaped by it, everything is directed towards it. Love is God's greatest gift to humanity, it is his promise and our hope.

Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate (2009), 2

An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters.

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium (2013), 183

I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.

Pope Francis, Laudato Si' (2015), 10

The Bible teaches that every man and woman is created out of love and made in God's image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26). This shows us the immense dignity of each person, 'who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons' (CCC, 357). Saint John Paul II stated that the special love of the Creator for each human being 'confers upon him or her an infinite dignity'. Those who are committed to defending human dignity can find in the Christian faith the deepest reasons for this

commitment. How wonderful is the certainty that each human life is not adrift in the midst of hopeless chaos, in a world ruled by pure chance or endlessly recurring cycles! The Creator can say to each one of us: 'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you' (Jer 1:5). We were conceived in the heart of God, and for this reason 'each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary'.

Pope Francis, Laudato Si, 65

In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world's goods.

Pope Francis, Laudato Si' (2015), 158

Solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community. It means that the lives of all are prior to the appropriation of goods by a few. It also means combatting the structural causes of poverty, inequality, the lack of work, land and housing, the denial of social and labour rights.

Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti (2020), 116

We must put human dignity back at the centre, and on that pillar build the alternative social structures we need.

Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, 168

The dignity of others is to be respected in all circumstances, not because that dignity is something we have invented or imagined, but because human beings possess an intrinsic worth...

Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, 213

For us the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From it, there arises...the primacy given to relationship, to the encounter with the sacred mystery of the other, to universal communion with the entire human family, as a vocation of all.

Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, 277

Appendix 5 – Questions for Discussion

The sacredness of life and the dignity of the human person

- How do you as leaders model respect for the dignity of all?
- How do we help the school community become informed about issues that affect human dignity?
- How do you as leaders ensure your policies and practices support human dignity?

Solidarity with all people

- How do you educate the school community in aspects of solidarity?
- What practical steps does your school have in place to show solidarity with others?
- What opportunities do pupils have to help others?
- How do pupils grow to understand and show respect for other cultures, races, religions?
- What does your school community do to support other schools in different parts of the world?

A preferential option for the poor

- How does a 'preferential option for the poor' manifest itself in your policies and procedures?
- How do you help pupils develop their understanding of the causes of poverty?
- How do you offer pupils opportunities to put into practice practical strategies for helping the poor?

The call to community and participation

- How do you form community within your school?
- How does the school try to strengthen its connections to the universal Church and to the local parish(es)?
- How do you support the families connected to your school?
- How does your school contribute to the 'common good'?
- How do you help pupils critique the current ideology of individualism?

Human rights and the responsibility to protect them

- How do you encourage the formation of a community that accepts its responsibility to others?
- How do you promote peace education within your school community?
- How do you encourage your pupils to work for a world where the rights of all are respected?
- How do you encourage and promote 'signs of hope'?

Stewardship and the care of creation

- How do you educate your school community in environmental awareness?
- What informs the choices you make about the school environment?
- How do you encourage your school community to live in a simpler way?
- How do you help pupils to appreciate, and develop a sense of responsibility for, creation?
- How do you work in partnership with others to care for creation?