Together in India Assembly
Inspired by Catholic Social Teaching

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS: What is Catholic Social Teaching (CST)?

Catholic Social Teaching provides a vision for a just society in which the dignity of all people is recognised, and those who are vulnerable are cared for. It can be used to reflect on, and guide how, we relate to one another in our local, national, and global communities.

Catholic Social Teaching is rooted in Scripture and communicated through a tradition of theological documents. It has evolved over time in response to the challenges of the day and the lived experience of the people of God (members of the Catholic Church).

Catholic Social Teaching is based on the belief that we are called by God to build his Kingdom of justice, peace, and love. This call involves every aspect of our lives, from the things we pray about, to how we live as responsible citizens. The following are CST themes are familiar to primary schools. These themes are:

- **Human dignity:** We are all children of God the Father; made in God's image and likeness. This bestows on all people a dignity that impacts the way in which we treat one another – those we know and meet, but also those we may not know, or who live many miles away.
- **Option for the poor:** Catholics follow the example of Christ, always putting the poor first; we are called to always be thinking about how the poorest and most vulnerable will be affected by our actions and the way we live our lives.
- **Rights and responsibilities:** Every human being has basic human rights and responsibilities. All humans also share a responsibility to take care of one another, to protect each other, and to preserve these rights for one another.
- **Community and participation:** Each human person is sacred and special. In community, we realise the fulfilment of our dignity and rights in relationship with, and to, others. God calls us to participate in our community, where we are to use the gifts that God has given us.
- **Solidarity:** God is the Father of everyone, so we are all brothers and sisters in God's family wherever we live. We should always try to work together for the good of everyone, not just ourselves.
- **Dignity of work:** Our dignity is linked to our ability to work and provide for ourselves and our families. The Church believes that all people should be enabled to work, and have a decent work environment and fair pay for what they do.
- **Stewardship:** The earth is God's gift to us. We are stewards of Creation and have a responsibility to treat it with respect.

In the following assembly, focus will be given to the first five of these themes. Short YouTube films to accompany the CST themes are available via a link on relevant slides. Each film is followed by suggested questions, linked scripture, activity, and prayer. **If time is limited, we suggest splitting the assembly and delivering it over multiple periods, to allow ample opportunity for discussion and reflection.**

SLIDE ONE

In our assembly today, we're going to be thinking about Catholic Social Teaching. If I were to ask you what the word 'teaching' means, what answers would you give?

Pause for responses.

Teaching helps us to grow in knowledge and understanding, which means that we can judge situations wisely and make good decisions. The Church has a special type of teaching called Catholic Social Teaching.

Catholic Social Teaching provides us with knowledge and understanding. It helps us live and work with others to make the world we all share fairer, safer, and healthier. This is the world Jesus helps us to build together: the world God wants for all his children.

Mission Together is Pope Francis' charity for children. Through Mission Together, children around the world join in prayer and acts of charity, to help other children living in poverty. Today we are going to find out about a Mission Together project in India, and how that project shows us examples of Catholic Social Teaching in action. We'll focus on the lessons it teaches about:

- Human dignity
- Rights and Responsibility
- Community and Participation
- Solidarity
- Option for the poor

SLIDE TWO

The Mission Together project that we'll be visiting is in India, in a huge city called Chennai. Chennai is home to over ten million people and many of these live in 'slums'.

'Slum' is the name given to a poor and overcrowded area of a city. Houses in slums are not safe. They are badly built with plywood, corrugated metal, sheets of plastic, cardboard or any available material. Slums often lack the things people need to live well: like clean drinking water, electricity, working toilets and sewers.

The people who live in the slum are there because they cannot afford to live anywhere else. You can see a picture of a slum on the screen.

- **Try to imagine living in a slum.**
- **What do you think would be the hardest thing about living there?**

SLIDE THREE – Human Dignity

The girl on the screen is called Sabitha. She and her family lived in one of Chennai's biggest slums. This slum was near the city centre, so Sabitha and her family could travel to school and work easily.

But the city leaders decided to build expensive flats and shops on the slum, so they moved Sabitha and her family into a resettlement area many miles away. There they were given a small flat with just one room to wash, cook, eat, live, and sleep in.

Sabitha's flat does not have clean running water and her family have to share a toilet with their neighbours. The sewers do not work and rubbish is seldom collected. Life in the flat isn't any better than life in the slum. In some ways it is harder, because there are no jobs, few schools, or health centres nearby.

Sabitha and her family are among 100,000 slum dwellers who were moved out of the city and into this huge area with hardly any cars, buses or trains to travel to work or school.

- **Do you think moving the slum dwellers out of the city was fair?**

The slum dwellers in Chennai are often treated as if they had no dignity. This is very wrong. Jesus taught us that all people have dignity and therefore should be treated with dignity.

Click to reveal the question 'What is human dignity?'

- **Can anybody tell us what the word *dignity* means?**

Dignity means 'being worthy of respect'. Jesus taught us that everyone in the world has dignity because we are all children of God, our Father.

It doesn't matter who we are, who our friends are, what we own, what we look like. What matters is that we are special because we are all God's children, and are made in God's image and likeness.

- **Can anyone tell us how we can treat others with dignity?**

We treat others with dignity when we show them respect and kindness. Treating people with dignity means never bullying them, or treating them badly, or making them feel different or not good enough.

SLIDE FOUR

Thankfully, a few years ago some Religious Sister's moved into the resettlement area. They wanted to show the people the dignity they deserve. You can see a picture of one of these Religious Sisters on screen.

- **Can anyone tell us what a Religious Sister is?**

A Religious Sister is a woman who leaves her family and friends to devote her life to God and live with other Religious Sisters. They pray together and do what they can to help people so that everybody might know how much God loves and values us all.

The Sisters help to share God's love in the area. One of the ways they do this is by helping the children who live there, like Sabitha.

Living in the area can be dangerous, especially for girls. Having the skills and confidence to look after yourself is very important. So, the Sisters invite the children to take part in martial arts classes.

Learning martial arts helps the children to develop dignity and respect for themselves and for others. It also teaches them skills in self-defence. Thanks to the Sisters, Sabitha has been learning martial arts for a while and has won lots of trophies and medals.

Click on the YouTube link on screen to watch a short film of Sabitha and her martial arts skills.

The love and support provided by the Sisters reminds the children of their dignity.

- **How can we treat everyone with dignity?**
- **How can you treat yourself with dignity?**
- **How can we care for ourselves and each other?**

SLIDE FIVE – Option for the poor

As we have learned, living in the area can be dangerous and difficult. Sadly, there are some children whose life is harder still. Their families are so poor, they don't even have a flat to stay in. These families have to live and sleep on the streets.

Because these street children have no address, they are unable to gain a place in school. This is a big worry as it stops children from developing their gifts and talents.

Thankfully, Sister Nirmala – who we can see on screen - helps to run a street school every evening for these children. For the first few minutes they play together, then Sister Nirmala leads them in five minutes of yoga to help the children become calm, then the children have lessons.

Click on the YouTube link on screen to watch a short film about the street school.

Sister Nirmala's faith in Jesus inspires her to run the street school. She reads in the Bible how Jesus reached out to those who were poor and who needed extra help, to show them dignity and give them hope. As a follower of Jesus, she wants to do the same.

- **Who are the people that Jesus reached out to help?**
- **Who are the people in our communities who need extra help?**
- **What can we do to support those who need extra help?**

SLIDE SIX – Rights and responsibilities

As well as organising the street school, Sister Nirmala and her fellow Religious Sisters also organise a children's parliament for all the young people who live in the area.

- **Can anybody tell us what a parliament is?**

A parliament is a group of people chosen to govern and make laws.

The Sisters teach the young people who join the Children's Parliament about their rights and responsibilities as members of their community and as children of God. The children learn that they have a legal right to things that help them to live well. Things like clean water, education, healthcare, and safety.

The children also learn that they have a responsibility to make sure other people have these rights, too. To achieve this, members of the parliament work together and speak out when they see unfairness or problems in the community that need fixing. They also meet with local leaders to demand change. On screen you can see some members of the Children's Parliament.

Click on the YouTube link on screen to watch a short film of the Children's Parliament President.

- **What unfairness would you like to change if you were the President of the Children's Parliament?**
- **What unfairness would you like to change if you were the President of a Children's Parliament here in (your school/village/town/city)?**
- **What values and virtues do good leaders show?**

SLIDE SEVEN – Community and participation

Learning about their rights and responsibilities also encourages the children to look after the people within their community. One group of people helped by the children are the elderly.

Sadly, there are some elderly people in the area who have no money. Some of them also they have no family to care for them. Together with the Religious Sisters, the children living nearby do what they can to help.

They pray for the elderly and, although the children have very little money themselves, they use whatever money they receive to buy essential items for the elderly. With the Sisters, they deliver these items to the elderly and spend some time listening and talking to them.

The Sisters teach the children that by getting involved and working together as members of a community, they help to build a welcoming and fairer world - the kind of world Jesus asks us to build.

Click on the YouTube link on screen to watch a short film of the children visiting the elderly

- **What communities do you belong to? (e.g. school, parish).**
- **Who are the people in your community that you could help and how?**
- **Why is it important that all people are encouraged to take part in their community?**
- **Why is building a good community important?**

SLIDE EIGHT – Solidarity

The Sisters' faith in God, and their love of God's son Jesus, encouraged them to stand in solidarity with the community. Solidarity means working together and seeing that all people belong to God's family and need each other. When we are in solidarity with others we face challenges together, we support each other, and we celebrate one another's successes too.

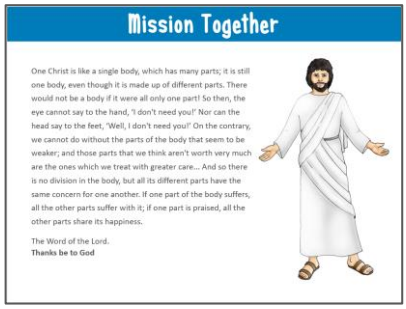
As well as the street school and the Children's Parliament, the Sisters encourage children living in the area to attend evening classes. In these evening classes, the Sisters and other adults help the children with their studies. The children are also encouraged to support and learn from each other.

During the evening classes, the Sisters run competitions for art, poetry and other subjects. Prizes and certificates are awarded to the children. On the screen is a boy called Kowshick.

Through the support he receives through the evening classes, Kowshick has won several art competitions. The Sisters and Kowshick's classmates are proud of his successes and together they celebrate his achievements.

Click on the YouTube link on screen to watch Kowshick speaking about the evening classes.

SLIDE NINE



The Bible reading, we will now hear teaches us something about solidarity. Listen carefully to find out how.

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians
(1 Corinthians 12:19,21-26 *Good News Translation*)

Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. There would not be a body if it were all only one part! So then, the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' Nor can the head say to the feet, 'Well, I don't need you!' On the contrary, we cannot do without the parts of the body that seem to be weaker; and those parts that we think aren't worth very much are the ones which we treat with greater care… And so there is no division in the body, but all its different parts have the same concern for one another. If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share its happiness.

The Word of the Lord.
R/ Thanks be to God.

- **What does the Bible reading teach us about solidarity?**
- **What does it teach us about being people different but equal in value?**
- **What does it teach us about how we should treat each other?**

Saint Paul helps us to see that we are all different, with different abilities and interests, but as children of God we belong together. Belonging together means that we take care of each other, especially those who need greater care or who others think aren't worth much. Saint Paul also reminds us that when we act in solidarity, when we feel connected to each other, then we feel sad when others are sad, and we feel happy when others are happy.

SLIDE TEN

The Sisters in Chennai are able to do so much good in the resettlement area because they stand in solidarity with the children and families who live there. This year the Sisters are asking you to stand in solidarity with these children too.

One way to do this is by praying for them. When we pray for others, we ask God to keep them in his care. When we pray, it's like we are reaching out hands of friendship across the world, just as the children are doing in the Mission Together logo.

Another way we can help the children is by fundraising and sharing our money with the Sisters, so they can continue to run the street school, Children's Parliament, and evening classes.

It doesn't matter if you don't have much money to share. when your pennies are added to those shared by other children in this school, and then added to those shared by children in other schools, there will be plenty to support the children in Chennai.

We always need to remember that we can achieve so much when we share and pray together, as God's family.

SLIDE ELEVEN

Let's pray together now as we say the Mission Together Prayer for Sabitha and all the children living in the resettlement area.

May all children
In the world
Share love
Share friendship and live
In the peace
Of God's love
Now and forever. Amen.