

LOVE IN ACTION



AN INTRODUCTION



“We want to be a Church that serves, that leaves home and goes forth from its places of worship, goes forth from its sacristies, in order to accompany life, to sustain hope, to be the sign of unity... to build bridges, to break down walls, to sow seeds of reconciliation.”

Pope Francis, *On Fraternity and Social Friendship*



“A poor church, and for the poor” is one of the often repeated phrases of Pope Francis. As the Church, we are continually being called to take seriously our call as Christians to respect the dignity of all people, to reach out to our sisters and brothers living in poverty, to care for the creation entrusted to us, and to take action to bring about a more just, peaceful world. This call is being proclaimed loudly by Pope Francis. It is an opportune moment for all of us, both individually and within our communities, to look at the rich body of work known as Catholic social teaching.

The message of Pope Francis is not new. The roots of the guiding principles go back to the Old Testament, renewed in the New Testament, developed by Church leaders throughout the centuries, and embodied in what became the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. As Pope Francis has said, “welcoming the poor and promoting justice” isn’t for someone else to do. It is our duty. It is what is at the heart of Caritas, the Latin for love, justice, charity: it is love in action.

“The Church’s social thought is primarily positive: it offers proposals, it works for change and in this sense it constantly points to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus Christ.”

Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*, 183

Using the materials in this pack, six themes of Catholic social teaching will be opened up for you and your whole community. By reflecting on Scripture and the teachings of the Church, we can look with new eyes at the world around us, the current challenges and injustices, and not merely feel compassion, but, determined to take action and transform lives, be Caritas people.

The content is not meant to be a comprehensive study of Catholic social teaching. It is an overview to support those working with their parish community to begin exploring the riches of CST, written in as accessible a way as possible. There is a wealth of resources which unpack more detailed analysis of CST available online.



We have used the teaching of Pope Francis, particularly as found in his Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, his encyclicals, *On the Care for our Common Home* and *On Fraternity and Social Friendship* and his book *Let Us Dream* as the reference points for much of the material. However, it is important to remember that previous popes, not least St John Paul II, wrote many important documents which have greatly influenced the teaching of our current Pope.

In the wake of the Lampedusa disaster in 2013, when 82 people died trying to enter Italy on a boat as migrants, Pope Francis spoke of the “globalisation of indifference”. It’s a phrase he has repeated often since, saying that “we have become used to the suffering of others” (Homily, July 2020). The Pope is talking about how we don’t engage, we shut our eyes to what’s actually happening in the world, and so fail to take positive action to do something to respond to this crisis.

The process from Cardinal Cardijn, founder of the Young Christian Workers (YCW), is affirmed in the Compendium of social doctrine of the Church, and is a handy tool: SEE what is really happening in our local and global communities; JUDGE, reflect, analyse what is happening through a lens of faith; ACT as a result. Despite all the words, the real challenge is to embrace and put into action these guidelines laid out to help steer our thinking. Love in Action hopes to stir up parishioners to live out their faith as Caritas people.



Pope Francis, On the Call to Holiness, 66

Let us listen once more to Jesus, with all the love and respect that the Master deserves. Let us allow his words to unsettle us, to challenge us and to demand a real change in the way we live."

Pope Benedict XVI, God is Love, 20

Love of neighbour, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level: from the local community to the particular Church and to the Church universal in its entirety."

Pope Francis, Christ Is Alive, 36

"Certainly, as members of the Church, we should not stand apart from others. All should regard us as friends and neighbours, like the apostles, who "enjoyed the good will of all the people" (Acts 2:47; cf. 4:21.33; 5:13). Yet at the same time we must dare to be different, to point to ideals other than those of this world, testifying to the beauty of generosity, service, purity, perseverance, forgiveness, fidelity to our personal vocation, prayer, the pursuit of justice and the common good, love for the poor, and social friendship."

Pope Francis, Let Us Dream

"The goods and resources of the earth are meant for all. Fresh air, clean water, and a balanced diet are vital for the health and well-being of our peoples. Let us put the regeneration of the earth and universal access to its goods at the heart of our post-Covid future."

