

Social Justice

Bringing about the reign of God

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

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Overview

This Object informs students about some of the most pressing social justice concerns in Australia: people trafficking; asylum seekers and refugees; homelessness; and Indigenous Australians. These concerns are matched to related principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

The multimedia element for this Object provides four graphics imbued with informative facts on each of the areas of concern. Clicking through the screens provides the students with a brief overview of the reality of the situation.

Teacher Background

Teachers are encouraged to review the 'Living a Eucharistic Life' section of the DVD Rom *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* to deepen their understanding of: the call to 'go forth' and live the mission of the Gospel in our daily lives; how we are called to live our Catholic and Christian faith; and the meaning of the Eucharist in our lives.

In particular, the following aspects of *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* provide entry points and context for this Learning Object:

- Within the pathway 'Believe, Pray, and Act', watch the video 'Action for Social Justice'.

Where appropriate, use this material with the students.

Supporting Content

This text supports the focus of the multimedia element.

The Catholic Church's teachings on social justice come under the umbrella of Catholic Social Teaching. It promotes a vision of a just world that has its foundations in the Bible and the rich body of thought that has developed over time from the experiences of the Christian community. Throughout history the community's response has changed to deal with different societies or eras. However the guiding principles remain unchanged.

There is no official 'canon' of principles or documents. In theory, the most important principles or documents to refer to are those that relate most

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Supporting Content

closely to the issue at hand. Here we will take a look at six key themes that come through in the writing.

Human Dignity and the Unity of the Human Family

Catholic Social Teaching and human rights converge at 'human dignity', in that it is a central concern for both. Underpinning this is that each of us is made in the image and likeness of God. As such, all humans are equal in dignity and have equal rights. As children of God, we are brothers and sisters to each other. We see the image of God reflected not only in individuals, but in communities too.

The Catholic tradition is opposed to anything that is in opposition to life itself and that does not respect human dignity. By the very fact of being a human being we are entitled to human rights, as a result of the claims made by human dignity.

Solidarity

The principle of solidarity infers that we are responsible for each other. Solidarity goes beyond emotions such as compassion and distress, to incorporate a commitment for change ensuring that everyone can reach their potential. It is about respect for and the promotion of the dignity and rights of our sisters and brothers.

The Common Good

The doctrine of the common good also entails the reality of our interconnectedness as human beings. Implicit in this doctrine is that various social conditions result in an environment where all social groups, and their individual members, are enabled to reach their potential. Each social group has to take account of the rights and aspirations of other groups, harmonising each group's wants under the common good.

Universal Destination Of Goods

God intended the fruits of creation to be enjoyed by all equally. Everyone has the right to use the goods of the earth to meet their needs. The universal destination of goods implies that no peoples or nations have the right to misuse resources when others are in need.

Participation

Due to the fact that human beings have intelligence and free will, they have a right and a duty to participate in the decision-making process of matters that

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Supporting Content

directly affect them. People are to be active in shaping their own destiny rather than passively accepting the decisions of others. The right to participate belongs to communities as well as individuals.

Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity is an [organising](#) principle; matters ought to be handled at the most local level. This denotes that the people who are to be the most affected by a decision or policy should be the ones with a key decision-making role. This structure should only be interfered with to provide support or to coordinate activities with a view to the common good.

For Reflection and Discussion: Ideas for Use

Select one or more of the following activities for students to complete.

- 1 **Invite students to reflect on the following and share their answers with the class:**
 - Think of a social situation and consider whether this situation respects and promotes human dignity.
 - When judging a social situation, reflect on the following: are the benefits enjoyed by some groups only attained at the cost of other groups?
 - Think about and discuss how one or more national policies may affect those living in poorer nations.
 - Does everyone have access to a large enough share of resources to meet their needs?
 - Dwell on the decision-making process at the local, national, or international level and ask yourself: who wins? who loses? and who decides?
- 2 **Form students into six groups. Each group is to concentrate on one of the social justice principles. Invite the students to reflect on the following tasks and share their answers with the class:**
 - Describe the principles in their own words
 - Describe instances where they have seen the principle put into practice.

After each of the groups have presented their responses to this task, their reflections on the principles should be displayed in the classroom.
- 3 **Invite students to work with a partner on one of the following tasks. Ensure that each activity is covered at least once in the class group. In each task students should read Matthew 25: 31-46 and describe how a Christian should respond to the challenge.**

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**For Reflection and Discussion: Ideas for Use**

- Experience what it is like to be a refugee in a camp with this [interactive map](#).
- Experience what it is like to be a field worker in a refugee camp by playing the interactive game '[Refugee camp in your world](#)'.
- Test yourself with this online quiz – [Who is a refugee?](#) (From the UK)
- Undertake a project to trace your family's origins as far back as possible, even if movement is only regional. Draw your own personal map of your family (at least back to grandparents). You should also find out and note down the year and the main reasons for those movements and possibly find out as to whether any other family members past or present have moved, as well as their motives for doing so. If you or your family is reluctant to give the reasons or simply do not know them, just indicate 'private'.
- Write a story in the first person about being homeless. Why are you homeless, what difficulties do you face on a daily basis, what options do you have ... and anything else you think should be highlighted.

Teacher Professional Development ResourcesBringing Them Home Report, [Human Rights Education for teachers](#)[Mercy and Justice Shall Meet](#) – CD Rom