

Catholic Social Teaching Workshop Notes Dignity of Work



SLIDE ONE – HOLDING SLIDE

LEADER'S NOTES

This presentation lasts up to 30 minutes. **We recommend you deliver the whole workshop but please feel free to use the slides and script as time and circumstances allow. To reduce time, omit extension tasks.**

This is one of five workshops referencing the principles of **Catholic Social Teaching**. Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is based on Scripture, Tradition and Church Teaching as given by popes, bishops and theologians. It offers a set of principles to help us think about how we should interact with others, the choices we make, and how we view creation. For more information about Catholic Social Teaching please visit www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk



START OF PRESENTATION

SLIDE TWO

This workshop has been prepared by **Missio**, Pope Francis' official charity for overseas mission. Mission simply means, being sent out to deliver God's love to others through our actions and words.

When we look at the world around us, it's clear that there's a great need for God's mercy and love. We can feel overwhelmed by news of terrible violence, unfairness, suffering.

The Church encourages us not to turn away in despair, but to look at how things could be. To ask ourselves: **What kind of world do I want to be a part of?**

Then to consider: **What can we offer, individually and as a community, to build it?**

Pope Francis has spoken to young people directly about how, through their desire to make the world a better place, they have the potential to be great missionaries of God's love.

The quotation on screen is one of many in which he encourages young people to make a difference.



'The Lord wants to turn your hands, my hands, our hands, into signs of reconciliation, of communion, of creation' – Pope Francis.

Question – What do you think of these words from Pope Francis? Do you approve of the message they communicate? What or who is the motivation behind Pope Francis' message?

To know how best to live out this message, the Holy Father and the Catholic Church encourage us to turn to the Scriptures, especially the Gospels. In the Scriptures we learn how God desires us to live. We see this most clearly through the words and actions of Jesus, God made man.

The example is clear in passages like this from the Gospel of St Matthew, in which Jesus tells a story about the owner of a vineyard. We pick up the story when a disgruntled employee objects to the vineyard owner paying everybody the same amount for a day's work.

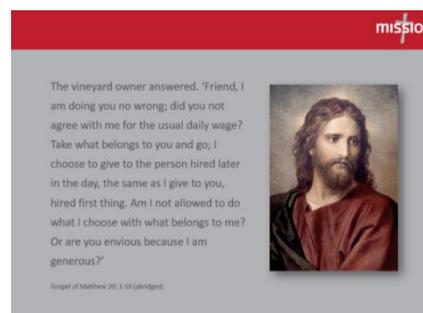
The disgruntled employee had been working hard since early morning, whilst others had been hired much later in the day. What we need to bear in mind is that those hired last in the story were probably people who had struggled to find work earlier elsewhere, perhaps older workers or those with a disability.

SLIDE THREE

The vineyard owner answered. 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage?

Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to the person I hired later in the day, the same as I give to you, hired first thing. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

– Gospel of Matthew 20:1-16 (abridged)



Question – What do you think are the lessons we are to learn from this passage about how Jesus viewed work and workers?

EXTENSION TASK – Copy and paste the scripture and question in the centre of Word document. Print onto A3 sheets and present to small groups of students (max 4). Ask students to brainstorm their responses. After a few minutes, invite groups to share their ideas.

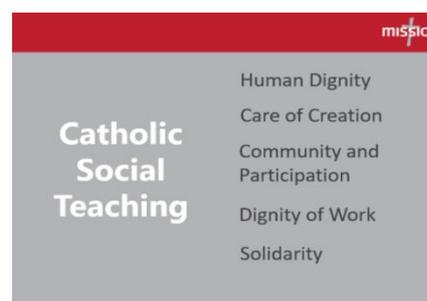
Suggested response for leader – The passage reminds us that God recognises the value of work as a means by which people are able to earn a living and as a way of providing people with a sense of dignity.

Suggested response for leader – Jesus' story also helps us to see that no one should be excluded from working if they want to; allowances should be made by us all to enable this to happen.

SLIDE FOUR

In addition to the Scriptures, the Catholic Church also guides its followers through its traditions and teachings, handed down and developed by popes and bishops over the centuries.

The lesson communicated by Jesus that all humans are made in God's image and so form one human family forms the basis of an important set of teachings: **Catholic Social Teaching (CST)**.



Question – Has anyone heard of Catholic Social Teaching and can tell us something about it?

FURTHER INFORMATION: CST came about in the nineteenth century as a response to the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution caused huge changes in the lives of individuals and societies. Across the western world, millions moved from the countryside to find work in factory towns and cities. The Church recognised that governments and employers were putting profits before people and treating humans like machines. Unemployment was high, wages were low, many were desperately poor. There were no human rights, no free healthcare, no welfare, most schooling was minimal.

Catholic Social Teaching reminded the world that a person is not a thing to be used and cast aside, but a valued individual made in God's image.

Since its beginnings in the nineteenth century, CST has developed to respond to problems of the day e.g. over the last few years, teachings have focused on the environment and climate change. By responding to contemporary issues, CST continues to provide guidance as to how we can build God's kingdom on earth, where all people, not just Christians but people of other faiths and none, have the chance to develop into fulfilled and loving people.

CST reminds us that we each are called to build up God's kingdom and so asks us to pay close attention to the problems that people face; things such as poverty, loneliness, conflict, discrimination.

CST focuses on different principles through which **we** can consider ways to resolve these problems together.

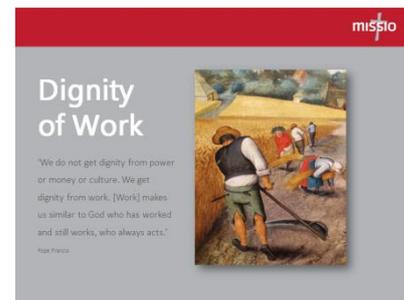
The principles of **Catholic Social Teaching** include ([click to reveal in sequence](#)): Human Dignity, Care of Creation, Community and Participation, Dignity of Work, Solidarity.

Let's take a brief look at the principle of **Dignity of Work**.

SLIDE FIVE

Catholic Social Teaching states that every person has a right to work whatever their abilities.

Question – Do you agree that all people have a right to work? Is work just about making money? What can we do to ensure people with different abilities find employment?



EXTENSION TASK: Present statements above as the following questions:

- All people should have a right to work.
- Work is just about making money.
- Workplaces should be adapted to accommodate those with disabilities.

On one classroom wall attach an A4 sheet with the words 'Agree'. On the opposite wall attach a sign with the words 'Disagree'. Ask students to position themselves in the room depending on their opinion. Students can position themselves in between agree / disagree if they are unsure. Invite students to explain their position and allow for students to move if responses cause a change of mind.

Work not only enables a person to support themselves and others, it also provides a sense of purpose and dignity.

CST reminds us that through work a person is able to develop their talents and cooperate with God in building a better world for all. For these reasons, work should be something we take pride in and something which we do to the best of our abilities, whether that's as a surgeon or service assistant.

Catholic Social Teaching states that all work has value and as such all workers should be equally valued. This means all workers should receive a fair wage, are treated with justice, and have a say about their workplace and how it runs.

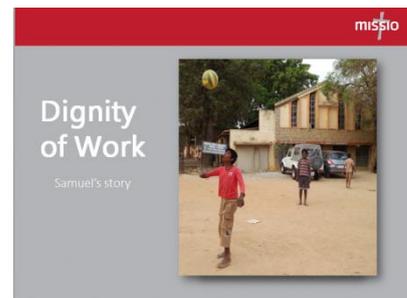
EXTENSION QUESTIONS:

- Ask your pupils if they think these teachings around the dignity of work remain important?
- Can they think of examples where workers in the UK or across the world are treated unfairly e.g. due to gender or age?
- Might there still be bosses and business leaders who believe making money is more important than a worker's dignity and wellbeing?
- What do the pupils think about this in light of CST lessons around the dignity of work?

SLIDE SIX

In the Scripture we heard and in many other passages in the Gospel, Jesus speaks about work.

This should remind us that for many years Jesus made a living as a carpenter. Today in Bangalore, in southern India, there is a school where **Missio** is helping train teenagers living in poverty to become carpenters and earn a decent living too.



This is Samuel. He is fourteen, and up until recently he lived in the biggest slum in the Indian city of Bangalore. Samuel's father died a few years ago and his mother is too ill to care for him, so Samuel moved into St Mary's orphanage and school. Here, thanks in part to Missio supporters, Samuel is cared for and provided with education and training for work.

Some of you may have noticed that Samuel has no lower right arm. Had he remained in the slums, this injury would have made it very difficult for him to find a job. What is worse is that Samuel was born into a group of people known in India as 'the untouchables'.

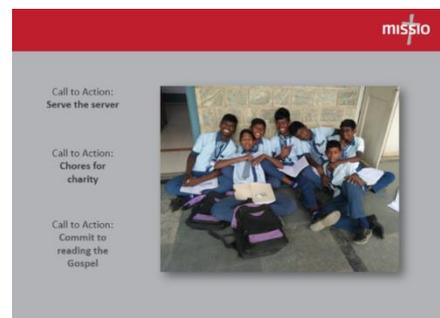
In some Indian cultures, being born into this group means you can't have any job you like; you can only ever have low-skilled and poorly paid jobs. Everybody knows who the untouchables are and consequently Samuel would have been shunned and faced a life of begging.

EXTENSION TASK: Ask the pupils to consider what it would be like to have to beg for a living. Point out that for the most disadvantaged slum dwellers there is also the danger of trafficking and exploitation. Ask them to consider the impact of living such a life.

Through the support of St Mary's, Samuel is doing well in his studies, at sport, and in his carpentry training. [Click to reveal image](#). Here he is practising his football skills. Samuel is a key player in the school football and hockey team.

SLIDE SEVEN

St Mary's orphanage is partly funded by **Missio's supporters**. Working within it are missionary priests, nuns, and teachers who devote their life to delivering God's love to all, often to the most vulnerable and forgotten in society. The picture shows Samuel with some other boys from St Mary's, many of whom also came from Bangalore's slums.



These missionaries remind Samuel of his dignity and worth. A dignity which, as Catholic Social Teaching tells us, is not affected by a person's background or circumstances.

There are many ways you could also be a missionary of God's love. Here are three simple actions you could take today:

Serve your server. People who dedicate their lives to service roles – shop workers, cleaners, teachers – spend a lot of time giving out. It costs us very little to give back. Clear a table in the canteen, put someone else's litter in the bin. Yes, technically you'll be doing a job that someone else is paid to do, but your helpfulness might be making someone's day a little less stressful.

Consider how you could support Missio and help millions around the world who live in hardship. Offer to do chores or any odd jobs at home, set a fee in advance and give the money raised to help people like Samuel.

Commit to reading the Gospel. The Dignity of Work and other principles of Catholic Social Teaching are inspired by the example set by Christ. Get to know Christ yourself through reflecting on the Gospel and through prayer.

SLIDE EIGHT

Mindful of the power of prayer, let us close our time together with a reflection on work and mission. Think carefully about the words of this prayer as we say them together.

**Lord, you look with love upon us in our work,
Whether a pupil, a cleaner, a builder, a teacher.**

**All our efforts to better our lives and our world
are pleasing to you.**

**You had your own particular work to do,
To share your love with the world.**

**Help us to make this our life's work too.
To be missionaries of God's love. Amen**

