

Catholic Social Teaching Workshop Notes Human Dignity



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

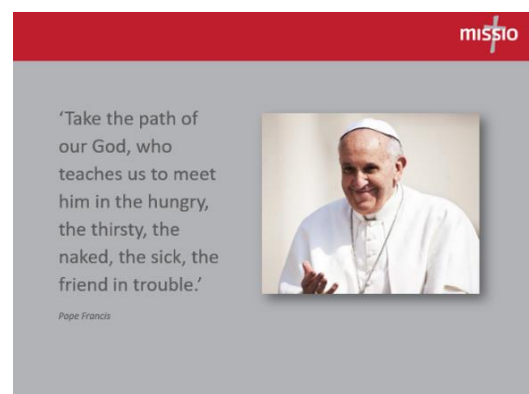
SLIDE TWO

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.

'Take the path of our God, who teaches us to meet him in the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, the friend in trouble' – Pope Francis.

To know how best to do this, 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.

SLIDE THREE

The King will say to the people on his right, 'Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you.

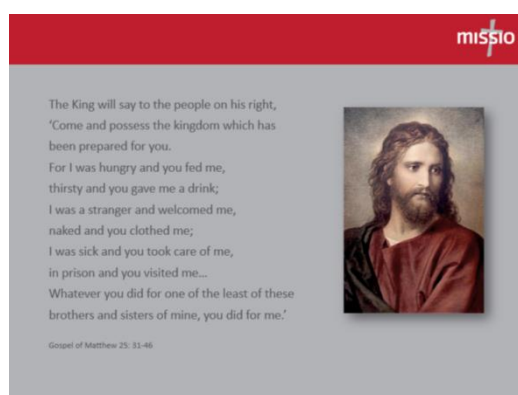
*For I was hungry and you fed me,
thirsty and you gave me a drink;*

*I was a stranger and you welcomed me,
naked and you clothed me;*

*I was sick and you took care of me,
in prison and you visited me...*

Whatever you did for one of the least of these

brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' – **Gospel of Matthew 25:31-40**



Question – What do you think are the lessons we are to learn from this passage, about how we should live in the world and how we should view others?

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.

Suggested response for leader – In the passage Jesus indicates that we are to look for God in all those we meet, especially in the poor, the suffering, the oppressed.

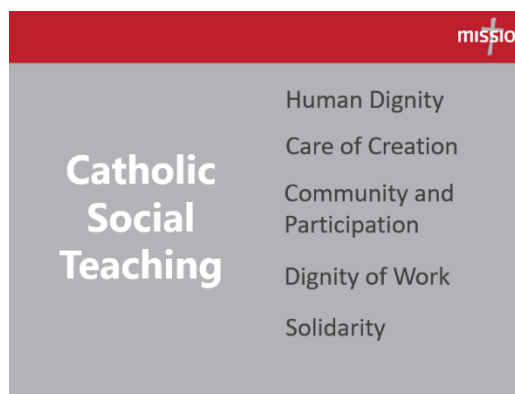
Suggested response for leader – Another important lesson is that we are to recognise ourselves as brothers and sisters with one heavenly Father: each member of our human family has the responsibility to make sure all their brothers and sisters are valued and supported.

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?

EXTENSION – 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.

CST 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; 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 **Human Dignity**.

SLIDE FIVE

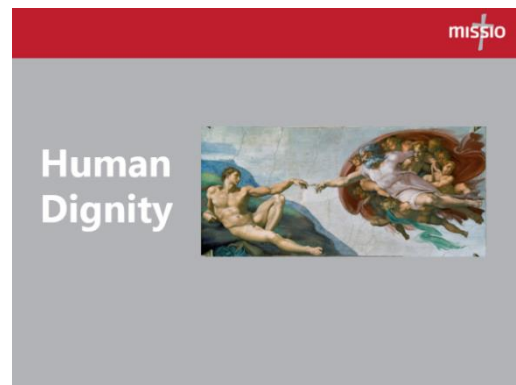
Can anybody explain what 'dignity' means?

[Click to reveal definition](#)

Dignity: The state or quality of being worthy of honour or respect (Oxford Dictionary).

Human Dignity is at the heart of all Catholic Social Teaching. Our understanding of it comes from Scriptures in accounts such as the one we've just heard, in the creation story of Adam and Eve, and many other passages in the Bible.

These Scriptures teach us that **all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. As such, all people regardless of race, gender, ability, belief, orientation or culture, have a God-given worth and dignity that is beyond measure.**



EXTENSION TASK: Ask if any pupils recognise the image. Can they explain what is happening in it? This famous painting was created in the sixteenth century by the Italian artist Michelangelo. It decorates the ceiling of the Vatican's Sistine Chapel and depicts the story of Adam's creation: a symbol that humanity is given life through God and is made in God's image and likeness.

Our human dignity is made even greater due to God's choosing to become man in Jesus. This allowed us to form a personal relationship with God and helped humankind learn directly from Jesus how we are to live and how we are to love.

Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that this important relationship with God is mirrored in the relationships we have with one another. Humans need one another. It is in relationships we find meaning, happiness and fulfilment.

While **Catholic Social Teaching** states that we all have **equal value** in God's eyes, it also tells us that we are not the same. Rather we are all **wonderfully unique**. No two people have the same fingerprints. Even identical twins have different DNA!

Our uniqueness and dignity should influence how we treat fellow humans, whether they are close to home or far away. Even if we hold different views and opinions, this shouldn't affect how we treat one another. As a consequence of our human dignity, every person is worthy of respect.

EXTENSION TASK: Divide students into small groups. Ask each group to come up with three ways we respect the dignity of others. Write on post it notes 1) one way for those close to us e.g. **really** listening to them 2) one way for strangers e.g. smiling and being friendly 3) one way for those living overseas e.g. supporting a charity that protects human dignity. Group responses are to be presented to the whole class then stuck on a 'Defending Dignity display board.'

SLIDE SIX

Sadly, some people's dignity is ignored by others. The girls you see in this photo all share the experience of having their dignity abused in the past. Thankfully, they are now being given the love and support they need to heal emotional scars and restore their sense of self-worth.

The girls are pictured in the **Cardinal Maurice Otunga Girls Empowerment Centre** in Nairobi. They were rescued from the streets and slums where they lived in extreme poverty. To get by, some of the girls were drawn into criminal activity and abusive situations. At home, others faced similar challenges. Some of the girls are AIDS orphans, some cared for parents living with HIV. Many of the girls have never been to school; their families were too poor to pay for uniforms, shoes, and book fees.

The Empowerment Centre provides free support for around 30 girls. As well as receiving an education there, the girls are given counselling, healthcare, and are taught life-skills. They also receive training to help them find work once they leave the Centre, so that they do not return to the streets and slums but are able to earn a living as cooks, seamstresses, or office workers.



SLIDE SEVEN

The nuns who help run the Centre want the girls to know their value and dignity. The nuns are missionaries; this means their life is spent delivering God's love to others, especially to the most vulnerable and forgotten in our world.

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

[Click to reveal 'actions' in sequence](#)

Wherever you go, treat the people around you with dignity. Whether it's a shop assistant, bus driver, dinner lady, smile, ask how they are, and remember to say a genuine thank you. It sounds simple, but a bit more thoughtfulness can make that person feel valued and brighten their day.

Consider how you could support Missio and help millions around the world who live in hardship. As we have heard how we are all born unique and special, ask your friends or teachers to bring in their old baby photos. Stick them up around your class and have people pay to guess who they are. (You'll need a quality prize for the winner.) The money raised could help support The Girls Empowerment Centre and similar **Missio** projects.



Commit to reading the Gospel. Human Dignity 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 human dignity and mission.

Think carefully about the words of this prayer as we say them together.

**Loving God, all peoples have their origin in you
and you gather them as one global family.**

**Fill our hearts with love for all our brothers and sisters,
Wherever they are, near or far.**

**Encourage us to share the good things of the earth,
and to work for justice and equality for every human being.**

**Help us recognise our dignity and worth,
And give us the grace to help those
who can no longer see their own.**

Amen

missio

Oh God, all peoples have their origin in you
and you gather them as one global family.

Fill our hearts with love for all our brothers and sisters,
Wherever they are, near or far.

Encourage us to share the good things of the earth,
and to work for justice and equality for every human being.

Help us recognise our dignity and worth,
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Amen