

COMMUNITY LIFE WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME (Facilitator 1) **SLIDE 1**

Welcome the participants introduce the facilitators and give a brief outline of the workshop.

This workshop is a brief overview of the teachings of the church on Social Justice and how we as members of the CWL can put into practice social justice actions through the Community Life Standing Committee.

OPENING PRAYER (Facilitator 2) **SLIDE 2**

Lord, as we gather together here today, we ask that you bless these women that they may be instrumental in helping to bring peace and justice to our troubled world. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 25: 31-40 (Ask one of the participants in advance to do the reading)

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FACILITATOR 1

SLIDE 4

HISTORY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Church has a long history of social justice. Its teachings on social justice have their roots in the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures. Prophets such as Isaiah and Micah who called God's people to lives filled with justice, compassion and peace. Jesus' call for justice and solidarity and his compassion for those in need became one of the essential parts of Christianity and challenged followers to live as He did.

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In the late 19th century and early 20th century particularly following the Industrial Revolution, there was a rapid change in social conditions. Popes, bishops and councils began to write documents reflecting the churches social teachings. Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope Paul VI promulgated on March 26, 1967 *Populorum Progressio* (On the Progression of Peoples) March 26, 1967 and Pope John Paul II published three great Encyclicals. *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work) September 14, 1981, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (On Social Concerns) December 30, 1987, *Centesimus Annus* (On the 100th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* - On Capitol and Labor; On Catholic social teaching) May 1, 1991.

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In June 2004, the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace gathered all the documents written over the years and produced the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* and then we

have the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which contains the official church teachings on Social Justice. Two very heavy volumes —not exactly bed time reading (Show these two publications so that the participants can see them) The good news is that all of these documents have been summed up into ten principles which we will discuss in this workshop and show how they relate to the Community Life Standing Committee.

FACILITATOR 2

SLIDE 7

HISTORY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE WITHIN THE LEAGUE

The League also has a long history of social justice. The first council was formed in 1912 in Edmonton, Alberta and was affiliated with The Catholic Women’s League of England. Its main purpose was to address the needs of immigrant women and girls. When the Catholic Women’s League of Canada was established in 1920 one of its main concerns was immigration. In 1966 the league initiated a Social Action program *The Christian in the Community* with the watchwords “Observe, Judge, Act”. In 1969 a resolution was adopted that 1% pr personal and luxury items be contributed to the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace and this continues to this day.

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Over the years, we have continued to bring about justice through letter writing campaigns such as the Argentina Grandmothers and the missing grandchildren. We have presented resolutions to our national government on a wide range of issues and our latest endeavour, WAP, Women Against Poverty.

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THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND HOW THEY RELATE TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF COMMUNITY LIFE.

FACILITATOR 1

SLIDE 10

HUMAN DIGNITY

The foundation of all Catholic social teaching is the belief in the inherent dignity of the human person.

Human life is sacred, and each person is precious. The person is made in the image of God. We are required to honour and give priority to the human person.

The dignity of the human person is the starting point for a moral vision for society.

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RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met.

Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency, starting with food, shelter, clothing, employment, health care and education.

Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities --- to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

FACILITATOR 2

SLIDE 12

DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF PERSONS

It is our responsibility, as Christian women and members of a national organization, to play an active role in opposing discrimination wherever and in whatever form it appears

We should:

- Become familiar with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Acquire an understanding of minority issues
- Become knowledgeable about human trafficking and its prevention
- Encourage members to actively denounce social injustice and violation of human rights issues at home and abroad

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COMMUNITY & THE COMMON GOOD

The person is not only sacred but also social. The obligation to “love your neighbour” requires a broader social commitment.

Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the good of the whole society, to the common good.

How we organize our society --- in economics, politics, law and policy --- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.

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OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE

We are called to examine personal decisions, institutional policies, and economic affairs in terms of their effects on the poor.

The obligation to evaluate social and economic activity from the view point of the poor arises from the command to love one's neighbour as one's self.

The "option for the poor" is an essential part of society's effort to achieve the common good. A healthy community can be achieved only if its members give special attention to those with special needs.

A basic moral test of society is how it treats its most vulnerable members.

FACILITATOR 2

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SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

We must be active in making sure the most vulnerable members in our society are protected with love and justice.

We should:

- Encourage members to participate in the work of organizations caring for those in need
- Be familiar with restorative justice programs

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DIGNITY OF WORK

The economy must serve people, not the other way around.

All workers have a right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, and to safe working conditions. They also have a right to organize and join unions.

People have a right to economic initiative and to private property, but it is unjust for some to amass excessive wealth when others lack the basic necessities of life.

Catholic teaching opposes collectivist and statist economic approaches. It also rejects the theory that a free market automatically produces justice.

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PARTICIPATION

All people have the right to participate in the economic, political and cultural life of society. This is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity.

It is wrong for a person or a group to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate in society.

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GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences.

We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. Solidarity means that "loving our neighbour" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Pope John Paul II has called solidarity a virtue, by which one demonstrates "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all."

FACILITATOR 2

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DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

To help a family become economically independent is to help a community become economically independent

We should:

- Invite guest speakers from developing nations, or other people who have visited or lived in those countries, to meetings
- Become knowledgeable through study about the economic difficulties of developing countries

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We should:

- Criticize structures that put profits before people and pressure governments to change these structures
- Become aware of conditions of child labour in developing countries and urge independent study of codes of conduct
- Be aware of the implications of trade laws and practices in the global economy

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REFUGEES, IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP (Article 298 Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church states the following:

Institutions in host countries must keep careful watch to prevent the spread of the temptation to exploit foreign laborers, denying them the same rights enjoyed by nationals, rights that are to be guaranteed to all without discrimination. Regulating immigrations according to criteria of equity and balance is one of the indispensable conditions for ensuring that immigrants are integrated into society with the guarantees required by recognition of their human dignity. Immigrants are to be received as persons and helped, together with their families, to become a part of societal life. In this context, the right of reuniting families should be respected and promoted.

FACILITATOR 2

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Canada and the League have a long standing tradition of welcoming new citizens.

We should:

- Become informed about Canada's official immigration and refugee policies
- Become knowledgeable about the needs of immigrants and refugees in the community
- Encourage members to volunteer at refugee and immigration centres
- Welcome immigrants and refugees into the community
- Offer assistance where needed
- Support and celebrate the concept of national unity in the community

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We should:

Assist in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs; if there are no classes available, start one in the community.

FACILITATOR 1

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STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION

The goods of the earth are gifts from God, intended for the benefit of all. We are not ultimate owners of these goods, but rather, the temporary stewards and trustees.

We are entrusted with the responsibility of caring for these gifts and preserving them for future generations. We are not merely consumers and users.

How we treat the environment is a measure of our stewardship, a sign of our respect for the Creator.

FACILITATOR 2

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PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT BECOMING A “GREEN CHURCH”

Encourage members to bring their own coffee mugs to meetings.

Encourage the organizers of parish events to use re-useable dishes, cutlery, etc.

Promote recycling in your community.

If your community does not have a recycling program consider writing a resolution for presentation to the mayor of your community.

FACILITATOR 2

The last two principles although not directly related to the Community Life Standing Committee are principles to follow in association with the other eight principles.

CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE FOR GOVERNMENT

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PROMOTION OF PEACE

SLIDE 27

DISCUSSION GROUPS (Facilitator 1) Divide the group into small groups of 4 to 8 per group. The following questions should be written on index cards, one per card. Give each group one question to discuss. One person in each group should act as the recorder and at the end of the discussion period they will present to the larger group their proposals. Facilitator 2 should be writing responses on a flip chart. **ALLOW 20 MINUTES FOR THIS ACTIVITY.**

WORKSHOP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Your daughter who is an elementary school teacher in an inner city school has told you that many of the children attending her school have not had breakfast and often do not have a lunch. What can your council do to help these children?

2. Your parish priest calls and tells you that a family in the parish has lost everything in a house fire. You know this family and know that the father is unemployed and that there are six children under the age of 12. What can your council do to help this family?
3. You have been speaking with a friend who lives in the United States and she tells you that she attended a talk given by a representative of Catholic Relief Services. You know from previous conversations that this organization is similar to our Development and Peace organization. Your friend tells you about mineral mining in the Congo where the workers and their families are being exploited by the mining companies. She also tells you that the minerals mined are used in cell phones and that this is the only place in the world that they are found. What action can your council initiate?
4. The parish secretary tells you that two new families have moved into the parish. They have just arrived from Haiti and have nothing. The parish has found apartments for them but there are still many needs to be met. The fathers in both families are the only ones who speak English. One family has 5 children ages 2 to 10 and the other family has six children all under the age of eight. What can your council do to help these families?
5. Your parish has a coffee hour following the Sunday Mass. You have noticed that they are still using Styrofoam cups and plates and plastic utensils. As good stewards of the earth's resources what can your council do to discourage the use of these products?
6. Your local women's shelter has had part of their government funding cut. This shelter is an important organization in your community and without government grants they may have to close. How can your council assist this organization to ensure that their much needed services are not discontinued?

FOR THE CLOSING PRAYER, HAVE ENOUGH COPIES SO THAT EACH PARTICIPANT HAS A COPY TO TAKE HOME.

CLOSING PRAYER

A Franciscan Blessing

May God bless you with discomfort ...
at easy answers, hard hearts,
half truths and superficial relationships.
May God bless you so that you may live
from deep within your heart
where God's Spirit dwells.
May God bless you with anger ...
at injustice, oppression and exploitation
of people.
May God bless you so that you may
work for justice, freedom and peace.
May God bless you with tears...
to shed for those who suffer from pain,
rejection, starvation and war.
May God bless you
so that you may reach out your hand to
comfort them
and turn their pain into joy.
And may God bless you with enough
foolishness
to believe that you can make a difference
in this world, in your neighbourhood,
so that you will courageously try
what you don't think you can do, but,
in Jesus Christ, you'll have all the strength
necessary.
May God bless you to fearlessly
speak out about injustice,
unjust laws, corrupt politicians,
unjust and cruel treatment of prisoners,
and senseless wars,
genocides, starvations and poverty that is
so pervasive.
May God bless you that you remember
we are all called to continue God's
redemptive work
of love and healing
in God's place, in and through God's name,
in God's Spirit, continually creating
and breathing new life and grace
into everything and everyone we touch.

Author Unknown.

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Catechism of the Catholic Church CCCB Publications 1994

Catechizing for Justice, Janet I. Miller, 2001, Resource Publications Inc. San Jose, CA.

We Dare to Say, Praying for Justice and Peace, edited by Sylvia Skrepichuk and Michel Cote

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