Printable Documents for

Social Justice

The Catholic Women's League
of Canada

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Prayer for Social Justice

Leader: Let us pray together.

God of yesterday, today and tomorrow,
we call to mind Your presence within us and around us.

Open our ears that we may hear Your word.
Open our hearts that we may understand Your word.
Open our mouths that we may speak Your word.

Inspire us with the gospel message,
that we may celebrate all that is life-giving,
restore hope where it has been lost,
and work to bring about change where it is needed.

May we live the gospel with courage,
constancy and love.
May we be open to the challenge
of Your call to true freedom.
May we be faithful to You in our daily choices and decisions.
May we make Your love known
through our words and actions.

May the triune God reign in our hearts, now and forever.

Amen.

Leader: Social justice calls us to seek equality for all and to find ways to right the many wrongs in our social systems. Let us pray together.

Grant us, Lord God, a vision of Your world as Your love would have it:
a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;
a world where the riches of creation are shared, and everyone can enjoy them;
a world where different races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect;
a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.
Give us the inspiration and courage to build it, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[These prayers have been taken from the Social Justice Resource Center website (socialjusticeresourcecenter.org/prayers/justice/].

A Meditation on the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

This meditation is from a free publication of Development and Peace–Caritas Canada (devp.org/en/) and has been adapted for the League's use.

ALL: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Leader: Catholic social justice teachings are based on these principles:

ALL: We pray for the Common Good

Leader: We are called to consider the good of others, and the good of the whole human family, in organizing our world – economically, politically, and legally. Human dignity can only be realized and protected throughequality in relationships. The gospel teaches us we must love our neighbour, locally and globally. To achieve this, we place the good of the human family over commercial interests.

ALL: God of peace and gentleness, hear our prayer and ignite in us a desire to do Your will.

ALL: We pray for the Dignity of the Human Person and the Sanctity of Human Life

Leader: The foundation of all Catholic social teaching is the inherent dignity of the human person, as created in the image and likeness of God. The church, therefore, calls us to support the human development, and wellbeing of each person in every dimension—economic, political, social, ecological and spiritual.

ALL: God of peace and gentleness, hear our prayer and ignite in us a desire to do Your will.

ALL: We pray for Economic Justice

Leader: All persons have a right to dignified work, and to fair wages and working conditions. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. The economy must serve the people not the other way around.

ALL: God of liberty and freedom, hear our prayer and ignite in us a desire to do Your will.

ALL: We pray for Participation by All

Leader: All persons are entitled to participate in community, and in decisions that affect their lives. They must not be excluded for any reason. Human beings are social and have the need to live together, free from discrimination and prejudice. How we protect the dignity of the individual effects the progress of our society.

ALL: God of all gifts and blessings, hear our prayer and ignite in us a desire to do Your will.

ALL: We pray for Peace

Leader: Peace places us in right relationship with God and with each other. Peace is the fruit of charity and the consequence of justice. It is the sign of *caritas* in action. We promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons and live the gospel values loving our neighbours as ourselves, and in all decisions and actions strive for justice and peace.

ALL: God of all gifts and blessings, hear our prayer and ignite in us a desire to do Your will.

ALL: We pray for the Eradication of Poverty

Leader: The moral test of any society is how the most vulnerable are treated. We pray for the strength of heart and mind to look beyond ourselves and address the needs of our brothers and sisters throughout the world – for the rural and urban poor. We are called to prioritize those who are in most need and share the wealth of resources

available to us. God's love is universal and inspires our actions.

ALL: God of all gifts and blessings, hear our prayer and ignite in us a desire to do Your will.

ALL: We pray for <u>Rights and Responsibilities</u>

Leader: We all have a right to those things which are required for our human dignity. Rights arise from what we need to live as God intended us to. These are innately linked with our responsibility to protect and promote the rights of others – that we do not take more than is needed at the expense of another's.

ALL: God of all gifts and blessings, hear our prayer and ignite in us a desire to do Your will.

ALL: We pray for <u>Stewardship of Creation</u>

Leader: The Earth is sacred. We have a responsibility to protect and to cherish the Earth's ecological diversity, beauty, and life-sustaining properties. Together, we must hold it in trust for future generations and act in ways that motivate others to take up this responsibility.

ALL: God of all gifts and blessings, hear our prayer and ignite in us a desire to do Your will.

ALL: We pray for <u>Government</u>

Leader: The government is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights and develop the common good. All people have a right to participate in the economic, political and cultural life of society, and in the decisions that affect their community.

ALL: God of all gifts and blessings, hear our prayer and ignite in us a desire to do Your will.

Leader: We pray that we can bring these principles of social justice into our lives, the life of our parishes and communities, and ultimately the world. Teach us Lord Jesus to act on the message of the gospel and loveour neighbour as ourselves in our everyday lives. Guide us in Your ways to seek the common good, respect human life, and promote human dignity in all our actions.

Help us reach out to the hurting, the poor and the vulnerable in our midst with concrete acts of charity. Just as the gospel tells us our lives will be judged by our response to the "least of these," so too will our parishes and communities be measured by our help for the hungry, the homeless, the troubled, and the alienated.

ALL: Let Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen

***Hymn**:* Choose from your parish hymnal, such as *Prayer of St. Francis, For the Healing of the Nations*, *No Greater Love* or *Companions on the Journey.*

Meditation on Social Responsibility

by Jack Reimer

Leader: Dear Lord, we cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end war;

> **All: For we know that You have made the world in a way that people must findtheir own path to peace within themselves and with their neighbours. We must live by your example and peace will follow**.

Leader: We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end starvation;

> **All: For You have already given us the resources with which to feed the entire world if we would only use them wisely**.

Leader: We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to root out prejudice;

> **All*:* For You have already given us eyes with which to see the good in all people,if we would only use them rightly**.

Leader: We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end despair;

> **All: For You have already given us the power to clear away slums and to give hope if we would only use our power justly**.

Leader: We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end disease;

> **All: For You have already given us great minds with which to search out curesand healing, if we would only use them constructively**.

Leader: Therefore, we pray to You, O God, for strength, to "do" instead of just pray, to "become" instead of merely to wish.

Sing together: The Prayer of Saint Francis

Litany for Social Justice

[If you do not have 12 participants, assign the verses accordingly]

Voice 1: Brothers and Sisters: God commands us through Jesus Christ to love one another. Inbaptism,

All: God of peace and gentleness, hear our prayer.

Voice 2: We pray for the strength of heart and mind to look beyond ourselves and address the needs of our brothers and sisters throughout the world; for the rural and urban poor; for the rebuilding of our communities; and for an end to the cycles of violence that threaten our future.

All: God of generosity and compassion, hear our prayer.

Voice 3: We pray for all nations, that they may live in unity, peace and concord; and that all peoplemay know justice and enjoy the perfect freedom that only God can give.

All: God of liberty and freedom, hear our prayer.

Voice 4: We pray that the Holy Spirit may embrace the most vulnerable members of our society; we pray also for an end to the growing disparity between the rich and poor; and for the grace and courage to strive for economic justice.

All: God of all gifts and blessings, hear our prayer.

Voice 5: We pray for an end to prejudice throughout our country and the world; that we will respectall people as precious children of God; and that racism, sexism, and all other forms of discrimination will be forever banished from our hearts, our society and our laws.

All: God of fellowship and equality, hear our prayer.

Voice 6: We pray for a reverence of creation; that we will care for it and conserve it; that we willuse its bountiful resources in the service of others; and that we will become better stewardsof all that has been entrusted to us.

All: God of nature and the universe, hear our prayer.

Voice 7: We pray for all immigrants, refugees and pilgrims from around the world, that they maybe welcomed in our midst and be treated with fairness, dignity and respect.

All: God of outcasts and wanderers, hear our prayer.

Voice 8: We pray for the sick, the aged and the infirm; for those with physical or mental disabilities; that all may have access to proper health care; and that God's loving embracemay be felt by all who suffer.

All: God of comfort and healing, hear our prayer.

Voice 9: We pray for all prisoners and captives; that a spirit of forgiveness may replace vengeanceand retribution; and that we, with all the destitute, lonely, and oppressed, may be restoredto the fullness of God's grace.

All: God of absolution and mercy, hear our prayer.

Voice 10: We pray for all children and families, and particularly for the orphaned, neglected, abused, and those who live in fear of violence or disease; that they may be relieved and protected.

All: God of children and families, hear our prayer.

Voice 11: We pray for the reconciliation of all people and for the Church throughout the world, that it may be an instrument of your healing love.

All: God of outreach and restoration, hear our prayer.

Voice 12: We pray for all who have died because of violence, war, disease or famine, especiallythose who died because of human blindness, neglect or hardness of heart.

All: God of eternal life and resurrecting love, hear our prayer.

Leader: Almighty God, you have promised to hear what we ask in the name of your Son. Watch over our country now and guide our leaders in all knowledge and truth and make your ways known among all people. In the passion of debate give them a quiet spirit; in the complexities of the issues give them courageous hearts. Accept and fulfill our petitions, we pray, as you know and love us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

A Prayer for Social Justice

(cwl.ca)

God, we pray that Your Spirit may rule over all things.

May Your Spirit rule over kings and presidents
over prime ministers and generals
over CEOs and party bosses
over the legislature and over the bureaucrats
over all citizens.

May Your Spirit guide us on the way of peace
on the way of honest dialogue
on the way of reconciliation between peoples
on the way of disarmament and justice
on the way of freedom and life for all.

May Your Spirit lead us on the journey of blessings shared with all
on the journey of educational opportunity for all our children
on the adventure of research and study that helps all men and women
on the road to meaningful work for all people
on the path of solidarity and love between all our brothers and sisters.

May Your Spirit help us
to speak up with courage
to share what we have and what we are
to challenge the powers that be
to offer a message of liberation and life.

We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen

CWL Prayer for Renewal

God of new beginnings, ever faithful God,
we thank You for your constant care for
the women of The Catholic Women's League of Canada.
We have sought to serve You in faith by service to your people.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with the help of Our Lady of Good Counsel,
we continue to discern Your call to seek justice
and build Your Kingdom on earth each day.

We ask your guidance as we plan the evolution of
The Catholic Women's League of Canada.
Grant us wisdom, the grace of discernment, and strength.
May each of us open her heart and mind to Your will and welcome the new life You bring to the League.

We ask this through Jesus, Your beloved Son and Our Lord,
Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,
God forever and ever.

Closing Prayer

All: Father, You have given all peoples one common origin. It is Your will that theybe gathered together as one family in Yourself.

Fill the hearts of mankind with the fire of Your love and with the desire to ensurejustice for all.

By sharing the good things You give us, may we secure an equality for allour brothers and sisters throughout the world.

May there be an end to division, strife and war.

May there be a dawning of a truly human society built on love and peace.We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.

Suggest closing hymns*: Here I Am Lord, No Greater Love, Companions on the Journey*

The Objects of the League

The Objects of the League are to be kept in mind to guide members' undertakings and shall be to unite Catholic women of Canada:

1. to achieve individual and collective spiritual development
2. to promote the teachings of the Catholic church
3. to exemplify the Christian ideal in home and family life
4. to protect the sanctity of life
5. to enhance the role of women in church and society
6. to recognize the human dignity of all people everywhere
7. to uphold and defend Christian education and values in the modern world
8. to contribute to the understanding and growth of religious freedom, social justice, peace and harmony

Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic social teaching (CST) identifies areas that, as Catholics and citizens of the globe, members are called to action. Accordingly, they are responsible to respect, to keep safe and to till the soil.

- † Life and Dignity of the Human Person
- † Rights and Responsibilities
- † Dignity and Rights of Persons
- † Call to Family, Community, and Participation
- † Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- † The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
- † Solidarity
- † Care for God's Creation

Examples of Social Justice Issues

Ageism
Abortion Laws in Canada
Access to Justice
Children's Rights
Civil Rights
Drug and Alcohol Laws
Domestic Violence
Discrimination
Economic Issues
Education System
Environmental Pollution
Food and Drug Safety
Global Warming
Health Care
Housing
Homelessness
Human Rights Violations
Human Trafficking
Hunger
Immigration
Labour
Pensions
Poverty
Prison Reform
Racism
Refugees
Religious Intolerance
Teen Issues
Treatment of Indigenous Peoples
Water Access
Wage Inequities
Welfare
Women's Rights

Sample Social Justice Projects to Inspire Your Thinking!

Each parish council and community will have different needs and different resources. This list is just a beginning and is meant to inspire and encourage you to act!

- Talk to the administration at a local school and ask if there is a project you could help with or a family that could use some extra financial support.
- Sponsor a seasonal dinner and offer it free to those in need.
- Meet with the youth ministry coordinator in your parish to see if there is a project the group would like some financial help with.
- Support Development and Peace—Caritas Canada, a Catholic and International organization that supports global and local social issues.
- Write thank you letters to proper delegates in your community, city or province who have done something that has made a difference to the world! Recognize their efforts and congratulate them for caring and doing something that matters.
- Write letters to a business to congratulate and support it on a stand it has taken or an advertisement campaign or corporate decision you approve of.
- Support the local food bank or soup kitchen with a collection based in your church or community.
- Organize an event for an existing group to raise awareness of its cause by having a guest speaker and some activities to raise financial support.
- Organize a study day or workshop with guest speakers to help understand the issues of a particular cause.
- Initiate a recycling program in your parish community.
- Make and deliver sandwiches to a local soup kitchen or homeless centre on a regular basis.
- Make care kits with soap, clean socks, shampoo and sanitary products for a women's shelter. Consider including a chocolate bar and a friendly spiritual message.
- Check with your parish's Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and learn how you can support its work.
- Sponsor a child, family or young woman through Chalice Canada, a Catholic international aid association.

Smart Goal Setting

Goal setting is a helpful skill that can be used in any area of your life. Once you have gone through the brainstorming process and have chosen the project, set yourself up for success by setting your goals the SMART way:

Be **Specific** by making sure your goal is defined. This would mean having the title for a resolution or project and having an outline or basic understanding of what you are trying to achieve. For example, I want to bench press 100 pounds by June next year.

Make sure your goal is **Measurable**; that is, a resolution would be completed and submitted to the next level of the League according to the resolutions process. Or it may be that you decided to circulate a petition on homelessness and want to set a minimum number of people to sign the petition for accountability and planning purposes, or how many times to do it. Measure your success!

When goals are **Attainable**, it makes success possible. Your decisional balance can help with this. For example, if you wanted to be president of the United States and were not born there, your goal may not be attainable.

Realistic goals help people achieve success. For example, if you are 5'1" and aim to be 6' tall, you have short parents and you are past your growing years, your goal may not be realistic!

Timely goals help keep people focused and on target. Consider if you can achieve the goal within the term of your service or while you have committee members available, for instance. Resolutions, as an example, have a specified timeframe of when titles and completed documents have to be submitted. Ensure you make a schedule of when to have the various steps of the process completed. For example, a petition may have deadlines, so use a calendar to include a "BF" date(s).

Goals should also be *flexible.* You may have to adjust your timeframe (where permitted). You may have to change or modify your goal, and you can always go back to your brainstorming charts to consider the next idea on the list. In the end, you will have formed friendships, developed mutual respect, learned from one another, grown in understanding where Christ and the church can use your help and represented the League.

Brainstorming Activity

This activity helps councils choose an issue that can be developed into a project by a social justice team. The project is intended to be achievable, address a local need and inspire the group to act. It is a good way to get many ideas for discussion. Start with a clear question to focus on and keep it posted for reference. Opening this exercise to your entire membership can help foster the League's sisterhood and generate more ideas! By involving members, you are valuing your membership and, together, serving God!

The Question(s), Example

- What social justice issue(s) concern us at this time in our lives and communities? (*You may also include your province or across the country*.)

Materials Needed

- flipchart and flipchart paper
- red, green and black coloured markers (more colours if desired)
- two different coloured stickers (small post-its or large dots); enough for each participant to have about five of each colour
- poster or handout of the Basic Rules (*below*)
- poster or handout of Examples of Social Justice Issues and Sample Social Justice Projects to Inspire Your Thinking

Basic Rules

There are no dumb ideas—period. It is a brainstorming session and should encourage more profound thoughts and thinking outside the box. Remember, allow the imagination to inspire and to keep the entire team involved!

Do not criticize other people's ideas. It is not a debate, discussion or forum for one person to defend her idea over another's. Likewise, avoid discussions that attempt to rate or rank ideas during this exercise.

Build on other people's ideas. Often an idea suggested by one person can trigger an even bigger idea byanother, or a variation of an idea on the board could be the next "Velcro" idea. This building of ideas leads to out-of-the-box thinking and fantastic ideas. The experienced facilitator can group ideas to inspire thought.

Reverse the usual "quality over quantity." Here we want quantity, and the more ideas, the better. To brainstorm as many ideas as possible, you can challenge the members to come up with "just three more," and after those three, "how about three more?"

Keep ideas coming. When the brainstorming seems to be ending, the facilitator can review what has already been stated and ask, "Anything else?" This can often stimulate more ideas or give the hesitant person a chance to speak up.

The Facilitator

Choose the facilitator carefully. A friendly, non-intimidating person familiar with the group works well for this role. She must be able to spell, think fast and write legibly. It is helpful if the person has some working knowledge of the Objects of the League and CST. She will also group similar issues with related projects to help clarify and organize ideas, but it is not important to separate issues and projects at this time.

The facilitator explains the Basic Rules, poses the question(s) and records the responses on the flipchart. A good facilitator will go back to the question(s) throughout the brainstorming activity to inspire thought and keep people focused. She also explains that once the brainstorming has ended, all members will have the opportunity to choose areas and topics they wish to focus on (a way of coming to a consensus).

Sorting Activity
This activity is designed to draw out the most important issues to the membership. From these, a main project will be chosen for the membership to work on.

a) Before breaking to do the activity, ask if there are any questions or comments.
b) Encourage everyone to participate. It is important to ensure members feel they are being heard.
c) Explain how to use the coloured post-its or dots. For example:
    - Yellow – "Continue with this idea/service" or "ideas to keep."
    - Blue – "Look into how to implement this" or "project to take on."
d) Ideas that do not have a sticker may be kept for a later date.
e) Explain that there will be a refreshment break when members will be asked to view the charts posted, chat with other members, seek clarification and add stickers. *See Selecting a Project below*.
f) Give a warning when the time is nearly up.
g) Once the sorting is completed, take time to see what topics have emerged as most selected. The three or four topics most often chosen will then go to a social justice team. That team will make a final selection choosing a project the council can embrace. The Sample Social Justice Projects to Inspire Your Thinking might help the team with its work.

Consider having more than one coffee/tea station set up to keep the activity moving.

Selecting a Project
Depending on the time you set for this section, you may choose to do this at a second meeting. If this is the case, you will need to collect the charts to post at the next meeting.

Selecting a Social Justice Team to Choose and Develop the Project
An invitation to all council members should be made and can be done via email or letter, in the parish bulletin or pastoral announcement and whenever possible, by extending an invitation in person. You may also wish to consult with "experts" in the community who are not League or parish members on some aspects of the project. Provide a reasonable period for women to volunteer and once you have your social justice team, set the time and place to meet and begin.

Remember, the League seeks to engage all Catholic women and vows to "leave no woman behind," so inclusivity is essential. Do not forget to tell them that it will be nice getting to know one another and have some fun while doing the wonderful work of the League—bringing women together to serve "For God and Canada!"

Basic Rules Poster

1. There are no dumb ideas—period. It is a brainstorming session and should encourage more profound thoughts and thinking outside the box. Remember, allow the imagination to inspire and to keep the entire team involved!
2. Do not criticize other people's ideas. It is not a debate, discussion or forum for one person to defend her idea over another's. Likewise, avoid discussions that attempt to rate or rank ideas during this exercise.
3. Build on other people's ideas. Often an idea suggested by one person can trigger an even bigger idea by another, or a variation of an idea on the board could be the next "Velcro" idea. This building of ideas leads to out-of-the-box thinking and fantastic ideas. The experienced facilitator can group ideas to inspire thought.
4. Reverse the usual "quality over quantity." Here we want quantity, and the more ideas, the better. To brainstorm as many ideas as possible, you can challenge the members to come up with "just three more," and after those three, "how about three more?"
5. Keep ideas coming. When the brainstorming seems to be ending, the facilitator can review what has already been stated and ask, "Anything else?" This can often stimulate more ideas or give the hesitant person a chance to speak up.