Unit: Social Justice

Contents

Justice Education in Catholic Schools ...2
Restorative Justice ...2
Economic Issues ...3
Catholic Teaching about Migrants and Refugees ...4
Ecological Conversion ...5
Themes of Catholic Social Teaching ...6
Scriptural Teachings for a Christian Spirituality of Justice ...8
Charity, Solidarity and Social Action for Justice ...9
See Judge Act Methodology ...10
Service Learning ...10

Acknowledgement

Brisbane Catholic Education wishes to thank Rev. Anthony Mellor, Archdiocesan Censor for his contribution to the development of this course.
Justice Education in Catholic Schools

Catholic school communities engage in the mission of the Church in the world through daily active living of the Gospel and by teaching for, and witnessing to, justice, peace and ecological conversion.

“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world is a constitutive dimension of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.” World Synod of Bishops, Justice in the World, 1971, #6

A Christian sense of justice is grounded in the person of Jesus Christ. “By his action and teaching, Christ united in an indivisible way the relationship of people to God and the relationship of people to each other…. In his preaching he proclaimed the fatherhood of God towards all people and the intervention of God's justice on behalf of the needy and the oppressed (Lk 6: 21-23). In this way he identified himself with his "least ones", as he stated: "As you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40) World Synod of Bishops, Justice in the World, 1971, #31

“According to the Christian message, therefore, our relationship to our neighbour is bound up with our relationship to God; our response to the love of God, saving us through Christ, is shown to be effective in his love and service of people. Christian love of neighbour and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbour. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a sibling of Christ, the Christian finds in every person God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love.” World Synod of Bishops, Justice in the World, 1971, #34

Restorative Justice

An additional, essential element of justice in a Catholic school is the application of the principles and processes of restorative justice. These are evident when school communities search for solutions that promote, reconcile and rebuild right relationships with God and with one another. RLOS 2008, p. 38

Restorative justice stresses the importance of relationships over and above rules. It seeks at all times to restore the relationships between people when these have been damaged by inappropriate or offending behaviour. This has profound implications for any community that seeks to embrace restorative principles - and none more so than the school community where young people are learning to be effective and reflective citizens in right relationships with God and one another. Restorative justice sits within the broader notion of being stewards of creation. We live in an imperfect world. Therefore as co-creators with God we are called to act to bring the world into full integrity where people live in right relationship with each other and all of creation.

The main feature of restorative practices is an emphasis on undoing harm done, of whatever kind, and on looking to future behaviour. This is done by:

1. identifying and taking steps to repair harm
2. involving all stakeholders, and
3. transforming the old paradigm of retributive justice characterised by blame and punishment to a new paradigm of dialogue, negotiation and reconciliation.
Economic Issues
The Church’s response to social issues is informed by Scripture and its range of social teaching which includes such areas as the meaning and purpose of work and the right to work; the meaning and purpose of money; the realities of wealth and poverty; the phenomenon of consumerism; industrial relations, just wages and employment/unemployment; and the social purposes of economic activity. The book of Genesis reflects realism about work by opening with God at work creating the universe and entrusting stewardship over the whole of creation to human beings (Gen 1:1 – 2:25). At the same time there is recognition in Gen 3:19 that work can be arduous as well as creative (“with sweat of your brow shall you eat your bread”).

Church documents take up the topic of work and related issues:
“Every person has the right to work, to a chance to develop their qualities and personality through work, to equitable remuneration.” (Paul IV (1971) Octogesima Adveniens 14). Laborem Exercens, the encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II (1981) on human work, adds that “through work a person transforms nature, adapting it to their own needs but also achieves fulfillment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes more human. Unemployment therefore is an evil in that it impacts negatively on both human dignity by damaging human potential and depriving individuals of the economic means for a life worthy of their human dignity.”

With regard to industrial relations, Catholic social teaching emphasises the need for employer and employee to work together in a principled way that takes account of and promotes human dignity, freedom and responsibility.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has identified ten themes of Catholic social teaching that bear on economic issues.

1. The economy exists for the person, not the person for the economy.

2. All economic life should be shaped by moral principles. Economic choices and institutions must be judged by how they protect or undermine the life and dignity of the human person, support the family, and serve the common good.

3. A fundamental moral measure of any economy is how the poor and vulnerable are faring.

4. All people have a right to life and to secure the basic necessities of life (e.g. food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, a safe environment, and economic security).

5. All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions and to organize and join unions or other associations.

6. All people, to the extent they are able, have a corresponding duty to work, a responsibility to provide for the needs of their families, and an obligation to contribute to the broader society.

7. In economic life, free markets have both clear advantages and limits; government has essential responsibilities and limitations; voluntary groups have irreplaceable roles but cannot substitute for the proper working of the market and the just policies of the state.

8. Society has a moral obligation, including governmental action where necessary, to ensure opportunity, to meet basic human needs, and to pursue justice in economic life.
9. Workers, owners, managers, stockholders and consumers are moral agents in economic life. By our choices, initiative, creativity and investment, we enhance or diminish economic opportunity, community life, and social justice.

10. The global economy has moral dimensions and human consequences. Decisions on investment, trade, aid and development should protect human life and promote human rights, especially for those most in need, wherever they might live on this globe."

(A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God’s Children, pages 25 - 26)

Catholic Teaching about Migrants and Refugees

In recent times, the politics of immigration reform has become a burning issue on the Australian political scene and a prophetic opportunity for the Catholic Church. Australian society seems divided regarding the fate of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers coming to this country.

A refugee is any person who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside their own country, is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of fear of persecutions and is not a war criminal or person who has committed a serious non-political crime.

Asylum-seekers are people fleeing danger in their home nation who try to find a place where they will be protected from the threats they fear. They may have experienced torture and have lost members of their families, murdered by their own governments. International law attempts to guarantee asylum seekers the right of entry to countries where they can be assessed as to whether they are legitimate refugees. Asylum seekers are not illegal immigrants. They are legally claiming a status that is recognised in the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951, and the 1967 protocol regarding the Status of Refugees, agreements to which Australia is a signatory.

Migrants are people who move from their own society to a new country, with the intention to settle and rebuild their lives there. Australia is a country formed by migration. Everyone but the original Indigenous people are here as the result of migration. Over six million migrants have settled in Australia since 1945.

Public concerns focus on the cultural and economic effect of their presence, the importance of controlling Australian borders and national security, and their influence on the shape of Australian identity. Immigration does not need to be looked upon negatively as a matter of national security, but rather as a possibility for "widening the space of our tent" (Is 54:2).

The Catholic Church has been very involved in this issue and consistently offers pastoral care to migrants and refugees. In the Catholic tradition there are many statements of Popes calling on people to support and help refugees. Pope John XXIII referred to the plight of refugees in Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth – 1963) where he expressed the 'bitter anguish of spirit' he felt about refugees, "There are countless thousands of such refugees at the present time, and many are the sufferings – the incredible sufferings – to which they are constantly exposed."

"We cannot look upon the tragic circumstances which befall other members of the human race feeling sorrow and despair without doing anything. ... We are all witnesses of the burden of suffering, the dislocation and the aspirations that accompany the flow of migrants." To be part of one human family will sometimes require us to walk beside those who suffer and share our land and our wealth. As children of God we are called to ease the suffering of our brothers and sisters. Bishop Hanna, 97th Migrant Refugee Kit, 2011
Ecological Conversion

In 1990 Pope John Paul II spoke of an ecological crisis and an urgent need for an ecological conversion.

An education in ecological responsibility is urgent: responsibility for oneself, for others and for the earth. This education cannot be rooted in mere sentiment or empty wishes. Its purpose cannot be ideological or political. It must not be based on a rejection of the modern world or a vague desire to return to some "paradise lost". Instead, a true education in responsibility entails a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behaviour. (Pope John Paul II Message for World Day of Peace, 1990)

In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI reiterated the call by asking:

Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of “environmental refugees”, people who are forced by the degradation of their natural habitat to forsake it – and often their possessions as well – in order to face the dangers and uncertainties of forced displacement? Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources?

(Pope Benedict XVI Message for World Day of Peace, 2010)

Ecological conversion is about a fundamental relationship between all of creation and its Creator and the role of human beings as stewards.

We cannot realistically love our neighbours and leave out the neighbourhood in which they live. Nor can we pretend to respect that neighbourhood without understanding it as a life sustaining environment. But that in turn, means looking to its long term well-being. Indeed, to adore the Creator of the universe with praise and thanksgiving, to realise that all things have been made in Christ and find their connectedness in him (Col 1:15-18), is to become more sensitive to the wonder of creation. Let the Many Coastlands be Glad, A Pastoral Letter on the Great Barrier Reef, by the Catholic Bishops of QLD, 2004.

The science about climate change is clear. Human contribution to carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere has and is causing a net rise in global temperatures. Immediate cessation of all emissions will not halt the changes already occurring, but a reversal of current practices and reduction in emissions will reduce the impact of the changes. The technology to implement substantial greenhouse gas reductions is available. Substantial reduction in the burning of fossil fuels and the capture of the carbon dioxide from the fossil fuels that are burned are necessary to stabilise the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The Church’s message about human responsibility for the environment is also clear. Protecting the natural environment in order to build a world of peace is a duty incumbent upon all Christians. Global and intergenerational solidarity inspired by the values of charity, justice and the common good is essential if a halt to the degradation of the environment and the security of a peaceful future is to be achieved.
Themes of Catholic Social Teaching
Catholic Social Teaching is a collection of teachings on key themes that have evolved in response to the challenges of the day that are designed to reflect the Church's social mission. Teachings are grounded in biblical orientations and reflections on Christian tradition. It is a living tradition of thought and action. This tradition calls all members of the Church, rich and poor alike, to work to eliminate the occurrence and effect of poverty, to speak out against injustice and to shape a more just society and a more sustainable and peaceful world. The social teachings are made up of three different elements: principles for reflection, criteria for judgement and guidelines for action. It should be remembered that guidelines for action are not uniform and are dependent on judgements made based on human knowledge available in that time and place. One must therefore discern the signs of the times in applying the see, judge, act methodology when examining issues of justice.

Love and Justice
Love of neighbour is an absolute demand for justice, because charity must manifest itself in actions and structures that respect human dignity, protect human rights and facilitate human development. To promote justice is to transform structures that block love. Justice in the World

Dignity of the Human Person
Made in the image of God, women and men have inalienable, transcendent and God-given dignity. Therefore each member of the human family is equal in dignity and has equal rights. Human dignity can be recognised and protected only in community with others. Together in community, we bear the image of God whose very nature is communal. From this principle we can derive the following criteria to help judge a social situation: “Does this situation respect and promote human dignity?”, “What is happening to people, and to their human dignity?”

Option for the Poor
Christians are called to have a preferential love for the poor and marginalised, whose needs and rights are given special attention in God's eyes. Today, this preference has to be expressed in worldwide dimensions, embracing the immense numbers of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care, and those without hope. On Social Concern #42

Political and Economic Rights
All human persons enjoy inalienable rights, which are political/legal [eg vote, free speech, migration] and social/economic [eg food, shelter, work, education]. These are made manifest in community. Essential for the promotion of justice and solidarity, these rights are to be respected and protected by all the institutions of society. Peace on Earth

Promotion of the Common Good
The common good is the sum total of all those conditions of social living - economic, political and cultural - which make it possible for women and men to readily and fully achieve the perfection of their humanity. Individual rights are always experienced within the context of promotion of the common good. Each social group must take account of the rights and aspirations of other groups and of the well-being of the whole human family. Questions that flow from these principles when judging a social situation might include: Are the benefits enjoyed by some groups attained only at the cost of other
groups? What are the consequences of this policy for those living in poorer countries or in rural and remote areas of this country?

Subsidiarity
Subsidiarity refers to the concept that people or groups most directly affected by a decision or policy should have a key decision-making role. “The principle of subsidiarity must be respected: a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.” On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum. #48

Responsibilities and decisions should be attended to as close as possible to the level of individual initiative in local communities and institutions. Mediating structures of families, neighbourhoods, community groups, small businesses and local governments should be fostered.

Political Participation
Democratic participation in decision-making is the best way to respect the dignity and liberty of people. The government is the instrument by which people cooperate together in order to achieve the common good. The international common good requires participation in international organisations. Pius XII, Christmas Message, 1944

Economic Justice
The economy is for the people and the resources of the earth are to be shared. Labour takes precedence over both capital and technology in the production process. Just wages and the right of workers to organise are to be respected. People have a right to economic initiative and private property, but these rights have limits. Catholic social teaching asserts that no one should be allowed to amass excessive wealth when others lack the basic necessities of life. On Human Work #6

Stewardship
All property has a social mortgage. People are to respect and share the resources of the earth, since we are all part of the community of creation. By our work we are co-creators in the continuing development of the earth. How we treat the environment is a measure of our stewardship, a sign of our respect for the Creator. True stewardship requires changes in human actions - both in moral behaviour and technical advancement. The Church has a specific way of expressing this imperative: ecological conversion. This involves recognition that the call to Christian stewardship requires both an active and a spiritual response; that all of creation is sacramental; gifted by God and vivified by work of the Trinity. It implies a conversion of head, heart and hands in working towards sustainable futures for all. Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good. USCCB, 2001

Global Solidarity
We belong to one human family and as such have mutual obligations to promote the rights and development of all people across the world, irrespective of national boundaries. In particular, the rich nations have responsibilities toward the poor and emerging nations and the structures of the international order must reflect justice. The Development of Peoples and The Social Concerns of the Church
Promotion of Peace

Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among humans and among nations. “Peace is not the absence of war. It involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements.” Like a cathedral, peace has to be constructed, patiently and with unshakeable faith.  

John Paul II, Solemnity of Pentecost, Coventry Cathedral, 30th May, 1982.

Scriptural Teachings for a Christian Spirituality of Justice

Social teachings are located throughout scripture but most particularly in the Wisdom Literature, Prophets, the Gospels, the writings of Paul and the Letter of James.

The scriptural vision of justice is one of fidelity to the demands of relationship: God with us, and as part of that covenant, we with one another. Justice is presented as relational, not grounded in self-interest. It is social in nature and concerned with providing the full measure of participation in the life and resources of the community to all. It is about the promotion of the Kingdom/Reign of God. Justice in the scriptures is connected with love, compassion and fullness of peace. Justice is prophetic, active, always challenging and calling individuals and society beyond where they are to a vision of what God’s spirit calls people to become.

The God of the Old and New Testaments is not seen as impartial; God takes the side of the oppressed, and is deeply concerned with those on the margins. God’s preferential love is for the outcast of our social structures – the widow, the orphan, the stranger in the land, the tormented, the elderly and those without hope – a preference for the least, the last and the lost.

Scripture stories illustrate the vision of justice. Many themes can be identified in scripture pertaining to justice:

- the kingdom of God is at hand (Lk 4:16-21 and 7:18-23)
- the wisdom of the poor (Sirach 13:1-23)
- meeting the poor, meeting Christ (Mt 25:3-46)
- a God who is known through the liberation of slaves (Ex 2:23 - 3:20)
- Christ took on the condition of a servant (Phil 1:2-11)
- the word of a prophet confronts injustices and inequalities (Am 5:1 - 6:7)
- God listens to the cry of the oppressed (Gen 6:1-5 and 21:8-21)
- laws in favour of the poor (the three legislative Codes of the Pentateuch)
- seek first the kingdom (Lk 12:16-32)
- no more poor among you and sharing of all your goods (Acts 4:32 - 5:11).
- the great reversal - so the last shall be first (Matthew 19:30, 20:15-17)
- the generosity of God (Matthew 20:7-9)
- but he has sent the rich away empty (Luke 1:52-54).
Charity, Solidarity and Social Action for Justice

Catholic social teaching highlights the importance that the Catholic Church places on its members being active in the world in striving to bring about more just and more human conditions in which the dignity of human beings is acknowledged and supported. Situations of injustice and human oppression need to be identified, reflected upon, prayed about and acted on.

“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.” Justice in the World, Synod of Bishops 1971, (#6)

A Christian vision of charity is clearly outlined by Benedict XVI in Caritas in Veritate, 2009

1. Love — caritas — is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace. It is a force that has its origin in God...

2. Charity is at the heart of the Church’s social doctrine. Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36-40). It gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbour; it is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones).

For the Church, instructed by the Gospel, charity is everything because, as Saint John teaches (cf. 1 Jn 4:8, 16) and as I recalled in my first Encyclical Letter, “God is love” (Deus Caritas Est): everything has its origin in God’s love, everything is shaped by it, everything is directed towards it. Love is God’s greatest gift to humanity, it is his promise and our hope.

Cipolle (2010) describes the movement from charity through caring and compassion to solidarity and action as the development of critical consciousness. It involves developing a deeper awareness of self, a deeper awareness and broader perspective of others, a deeper and broader perspective of social issues and seeing one’s potential to make change. (Cipolle, S.B. (2010). Service-Learning and Social Justice: Engaging students in social change. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education.)

Action for justice can take many forms. Educational activity can promote examination of the foundations and principles of justice in the Scriptures, in the social teaching of the Church and in the wisdoms derived from human reflection on social living. Direct or mediated activity promoting contact with situations of injustice can raise awareness and consciousness of injustice affecting individuals, groups and the very structures of society itself. Advocacy on behalf of marginalised and disempowered groups is another form of action for justice. Protest marches, rallies, letter writing campaigns, political action, lobbying, civil disobedience, street drama and media campaigns are further tangible ways in which action for justice may be expressed.

Action for justice may entail group activity designed to promote consciousness of particular justice issues and action in relation to such issues. Thus action groups may form to promote reflection and
action on issues involving refugees or on pollution of the environment. The Judaeo-Christian Scriptures and the social teaching of the Church may explicitly inspire the activity of justice groups, or such activity may derive from other religious sources or from broad humanitarian principles or some combination of sources.

The **See, Judge, Act Methodology**, developed from the thinking of Father (later Cardinal) Joseph Cardijn, was incorporated into Catholic Social teaching by John XXIII. *Mater et magistra* #236. A brief article outlining the methodology is available from the Australian Social Justice Council. A summary is included here:

**See:** Seeing, hearing, and experiencing the lived reality of individuals and communities involves naming what is happening and carefully listening to and examining the experiences of the people in the situation.

**Judge:** Analyse the situation and make a judgement about it. This involves two parts, social analysis and theological reflection. Social analysis looks at the root causes of the issue. What are the economic, political, social, historical and cultural factors? Whose voices are heard and whose are not? Naming what is at the heart of the matter can be taken into theological reflection. What scriptural passages, biblical values and Catholic social teaching can help us to interpret, see in a different way and reflect on this issue?

**Act:** Combining knowledge from seeing, analysing and reflecting, determining what action needs to be taken to change the situation and addressing the underlying causes. It should also include a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the action.

Groups engaging in action for justice need to reflect on their own structures and ways of enacting the justice that they are endeavouring to bring about in the broader society. Thus, for example, a Christian institution such as a school or Catholic Education Office that tolerated serious injustice in its own structures, yet urged the righting of injustice by a civil institution would be seen as hypocritical and the force of its critique and exhortation would be lessened.

**Service Learning**

Catholic schools are encouraged to incorporate service learning into their curriculum. Service learning involves deepening one’s understanding of the scriptural foundations and meaning of Christian service and how Christian service is exercised in a practical way as a response to identified social issues and areas of need. Christian service includes active engagement in outreach and immersion experiences that benefit both those engaging in Christian service and those receiving such service. Critical reflection on experiences of Christian service in the light of the gospel and the social teaching of the Church is an integral dimension of service learning in a Catholic Christian school. *RLOS, p. 41*

Shelly Billig has identified eight practices that lead to positive outcomes of service learning. Within the context of the Catholic schools these practices might be reinterpreted in the following:

1. **Integration into the content and values of the curriculum**
   Clear goals are set with a clear connection between the goals and the activities with reasonable scope and support through focused reflection activities. There is strong alignment between the values that the Catholic school espouses and the focused reflection.
2. **Ongoing cognitively and spiritually challenging reflective activities**

These should occur before, during and after the project and should include multiple forms of reflection: written, oral and non-linguistic. Skills should be explicitly taught including problem solving, decision-making, questioning strategies, exploration, classification, and hypothesis testing. Reflection on justice necessarily involves a head, hearts and hands approach. Christians are called to be a transformative presence in the lives of others but this requires each person to reflect on their own capacities, prejudices and faith.

3. **Youth voice**

Giving young people a say in every phase of a service learning project has been shown to have a strong influence on their engagement with the project and long term attitudes to service and community engagement. Students who are given a voice in school increase their capabilities to articulate opinions, and begin to see themselves as change agents. Adults should always ensure students know and receive the assistance and support they need throughout the process and ensure student safety. This requires careful mentoring and coaching by teachers in providing spiritual and theological guidance when necessary.

4. **Respect for diversity**

Explicit teaching about respect and diversity as well as social skills such as conflict resolution should be taught and practiced. It is especially important to design service activities that have a mutual benefit for students and for those being served so that student stereotypes of others are not reinforced. Service learning seeks to reinforce Catholic social teaching that diversity is good and that “differentness” contributes to the rich tapestry of human life and creation.

5. **Meaningful service**

Service learning becomes more meaningful when students have a voice in the issue to address, when the issue requires analysis and problem solving and when there is a personal connection to the task at hand, often through the formation of relationship between the server and the recipient of the service. Taking on a task that is too big, like solving homelessness, may lead to feelings of frustration for students, when their efforts don’t appear to make a difference. Smaller tasks that are conducted and followed through so that students see the results of their efforts are more meaningful. Having said this, it is vital for students to accept that positive outcomes of our actions are often not realised in the short-term. Christians, each and every one, are called to do what we can. “Never see a need without doing something about it”. Mary MacKillop

6. **Progress monitoring** and process monitoring

Data should be used to measure the progress of the project as well as its effectiveness at reaching the project goals.

7. **Duration**

An appropriate amount of time is required for adequate preparation, action, reflection and demonstration of results.
8. **Reciprocal partnerships**

Partnerships with community organisations are a strong feature of quality service learning programs. Partnerships provide important resources including: a site for the project, funding, time, materials and opportunities to involve young people in meeting needs. Schools need to communicate a clear definition of service learning: the goals, the benefits, the responsibilities and accountabilities to any stakeholder. Reciprocity means that community partners are clear about their goals, capacity to provide service opportunities etc, so that both sides benefit, the relationship is maintained and the service learning project is sustainable.