



OUR SOCIAL MISSION

BY THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL & COMMUNITY COUNCIL

How to get a good maid: Teach, nurture and show you care

In Part 2 of the Dignity In The Home series, we focus today on the need for Communication and Respect in our dealings with our foreign maids.

Dignity home

Many of us are workers or have worked before. So we know that a motivating, productive workplace is one where there is respect and two-way communication.

We appreciate it when our bosses and co-workers listen to our needs, when they take into account our capabilities when giving us work, when they recognise our good work and provide constructive feedback to help us do better. It makes us want to do even better.

As employers of maids ourselves, we have the same opportunity to create a nurturing and productive environment for the foreigners who keep our homes clean and care for our families.

If we show them the respect that we would like from our supervisors at work, if we listen and talk to them the way we would like to be heard and spoken to, if we do unto them what we would like others to do unto us (*Matthew 7:12*), we will not just be following Jesus' teaching but we may be pleasantly surprised by the quality of our relationship with our maids and the quality of their work.

In fact, a good working

relationship and good communication are more important with our foreign maids compared to any other workers. They live with us, effectively becoming part of our family. And many of us entrust them with the care of our homes, our children and our infirm elderly. Often the maid is the only one at home holding the fort.

It is easy to forget that the maid is from a different country and culture. One maid tells how she was petrified of the vacuum cleaner. She had never seen such a contraption, and the noise it made gave her a fright. "Houses in our village have sand floors and I had never seen such a mechanical monster before," she said.

Language is often a real issue. Many Filipinas speak English, but most maids of other nationalities do not arrive with a good command of the language. Yet that is part of the package of low-wage foreign workers, and to expect agencies to present them trained and understanding us well from Day One is simply not realistic.

Rather, we should be prepared to give them time to learn and help them to learn. Remember your first day, or



first few weeks at your first job. What a difference it would have made, if you had a supervisor who was patient and explained things, and helped you when you made mistakes along the way. We can do likewise with our maids. How we deal with the mistakes our maids make reflect on how well we embrace the Church's social teachings on the dignity of the human person and of work.

We should seek to be nurturing and coaching. Abuse – physical or verbal – is never acceptable. And if we ourselves make a mistake, there is no reason not to

apologise for it. We respect our bosses the more when they admit their mistakes. Likewise, our maids will respect us all the more when we show our humanness.

But what about errant maids? The ones who steal, get pregnant, or abuse our children? If you are unfortunate to have such a maid, there are obvious legal remedies. But the majority of maids are here to earn a decent living. And if we treat them like decent human beings, they will do more than a decent job.

If we have children at home, we should consider what we

want them to learn. Children pick up behaviour from the adults very easily. Encouraging or letting our children be rude to maids is not only disrespecting the dignity of the maid, but it allows our children to grow up with the wrong values.

There are countless examples of employers who treat their maids well. The maids stay with these families for many years. They are a part of the family because there is respect, two-way communication and, yes, even love.

Is your family one such example? If not, take the first step to make it one.

Salt of the Earth

Your study guide on the Church's social teachings

WHY does the Church engage in so much charity work? Why are Catholics among the first in Singapore to serve foreign workers or those with HIV/Aids? Why does the Church have a representative at the United Nations? Is my faith separated from my role as a family member, an employee, a consumer and a citizen?

For the past year, CSCC has been publishing articles on this page, explaining the social teachings of the Church and how they are relevant to our daily lives. We have seen that faith touches all aspects of life and cannot be separated from our activities as parents, children, workers, students, consumers and citizens. The social teachings help us to make this connection.

Do you remember all the key social principles? Do words like "solidarity", "common good" and "human dignity"

still seem vague to you?

Well, here's a study guide to help you learn more about all these teachings. The CSCC, together with the Singapore Pastoral Institute, is launching *Salt of the Earth: A Group Study Guide on the Basic Principles of Catholic Social Teachings*.

It is free and covers the basic principles over 12 sessions. Each session provides a step-by-step guide to help the group look at everyday situations, reflect more deeply on them, understand the relevant social principle and learn to live it more effectively.

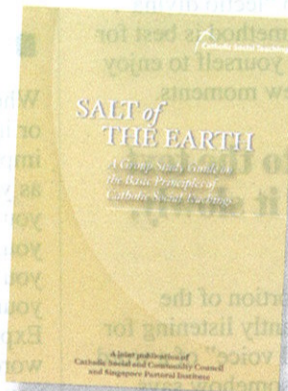
You can get together informally with a few other people and meet regularly to use this study guide. Or, if you already belong to a parish ministry or prayer group, set aside some time during your regular meetings to use the study guide.

Salt of the Earth can be used

by Small Christian Communities, Parish Pastoral Councils, RCIA groups, Catechists, young adults, charismatic groups and social ministries such as the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot." (*Matthew 5:13*) In these challenging times, Jesus Christ continues to call every Christian to do his or her part. We need to ask ourselves: In what way am I being the salt of the earth? How am I called to transform the situations around me so that God's love shines through?

Salt of the Earth will help your group to journey through this reflection and hopefully emerge more energised and motivated to make a difference to the world around you.



To get a copy of *Salt of the Earth*, send a group representative to attend a briefing at CSCC on how to use the study guide. Choose any of the following dates:

For Parish Pastoral Council members:
August 4, 5, 6: 7.30-9.30pm

For all:
August 12, 22, Sept 12: 7.30-9.30pm

October 18, November 15,
December 20: 2-4pm

All briefings will be at CSCC, 55 Waterloo Street, #09-03. To sign up and for enquiries, call 6337-3711 or email salt@cscs-singapore.org

\$4.36m raised from Charities Week 2008

THE Pope's call during Lent for "each one of us to act as a steward of his providence for our neighbour" clearly resonated in the hearts of Singapore Catholics. Charities Week 2008 raised S\$4,363,240 which was over \$800,000 more than last year's collection.

Many also offered their time and talents. Some 100 volunteers helped to design the fund-raising collaterals and process more than 15,000 donation envelopes. Some parish groups also organised initiatives to spur participants to do other good works.

acts29 organised a 24 Hour FAST (For Asia Solidarity Together) for its youth members who invited families and friends to sponsor the event, during which they surrendered their comforts and luxuries to live the lives of the poorest of the poor.

The Church of the Blessed Sacrament held its Youth Lenten Campaign for the Poor which included fund-raising activities such as the sale of hand-painted candleholders and Easter eggs, a car wash, movie screenings and a Tombola Night.

The Church of the Holy Family displayed the banners of Catholic organisations to raise awareness of the good works of these charities.

For more details on Charities Week 2008, visit www.cscs-singapore.org.