



OUR SOCIAL MISSION

BY THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL & COMMUNITY COUNCIL

We're in this together, it's in our DNA!

In this ongoing series on the Church's social teachings, we focus today on the Principle of Solidarity

WHEN news broke about the recent street protests led by Buddhist monks in Myanmar and the subsequent crack-down by the military government, people all over the world expressed grave concern.

Some Singaporeans wrote in to the media urging that more be done to help the people in Myanmar and many Catholics attended the prayer services that were held.

Why was there such an outpouring of concern? Why did many of us feel a certain anxiety for a people who live miles away?

The short answer is, we can't help it; deep down, it's in our DNA!

The Church teaches us that God made human beings to be intrinsically social in nature. We are not meant to be alone. It is part of our nature to feel a connection with other people, even if they're living miles away.

In these times of technological advances, the instantaneous news we receive makes us all the more aware of what's happening to people elsewhere.

In our Catholic social teaching, the Principle of Solidarity has a very central place.

What exactly is solidarity?

To answer this, we need to go to the core of our Christian faith, which is love. Love is God's own nature. It is the new commandment that Christ gave us: "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34b-35)

Love takes us to walk the path of Jesus "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself... becoming as human beings are... even to accepting death, death on a cross." (Phil 2:6-8)

This is solidarity. It's when we freely choose to stand side by side with someone, especially the suffering, and our actions say, "we're in this together".

The late Pope John Paul II points out that solidarity is not about feeling sorry for others.

Instead, it is "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." (*Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, 38)

But if God made us to have a common path toward unity, why is there so much division in the world? Why so much inequality, oppression and conflict?

In the same document, Pope John Paul II reflects upon the effect of an "all-consuming desire for profit" and "thirst for power", both at any price.

These attitudes snowball into "structures of sin" at the social level; that is, the attitudes become so widespread that they result in "norms" which we almost take for granted.

Some examples are the trade imbalances that perpetuate the gap between rich and poor nations and the politicking and back-biting that go on in many of our workplaces and families.

We're so used to saying "that's just the way it is". But it doesn't have to be.

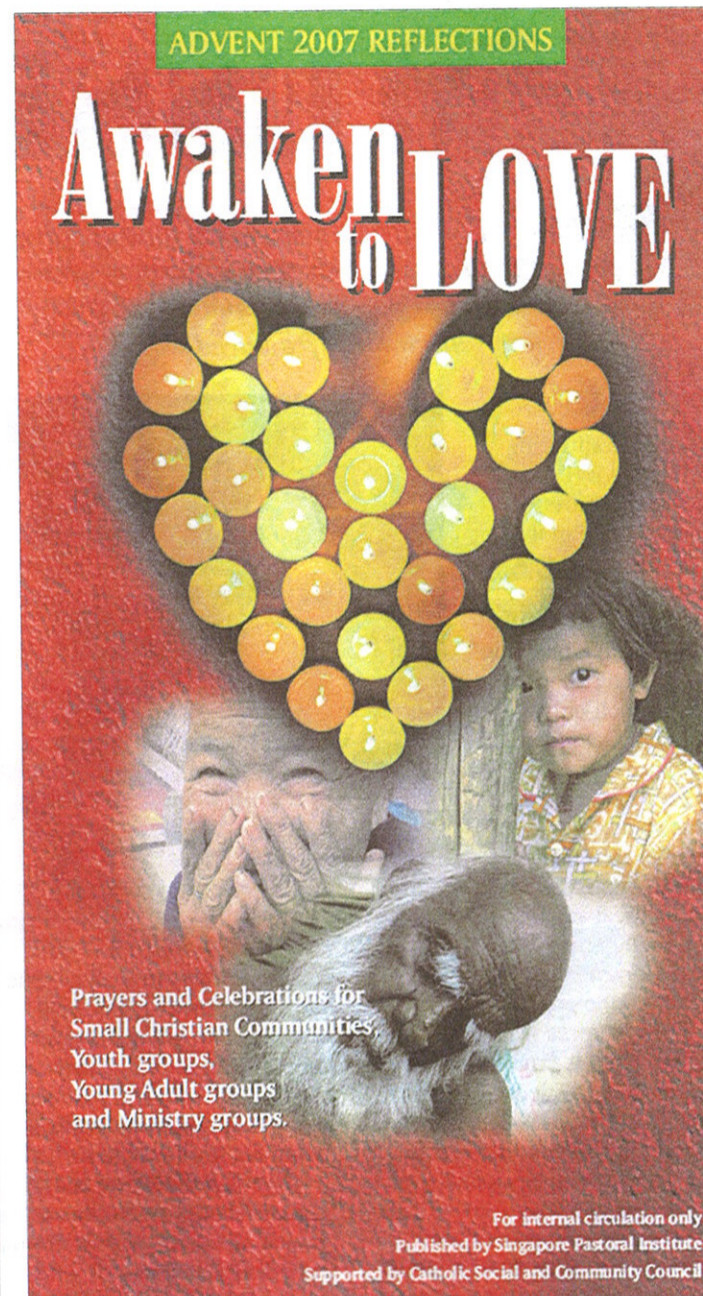
The antidote to all this is the attitude of solidarity. In striking contrast to the world's hunger for power and prestige, Christ bends low to wash the feet of his disciples and asks us to do the same. (John 13:1-15) Indeed, this love and service of neighbor is the mark of a disciple.

The Church highlights that solidarity is not just a virtue for each individual to observe but must also be expressed in our economic, social, political and cultural systems both locally and internationally.

People and societies are fully human only when they manifest love and solidarity. After all, we are made in the image of God who is Trinity - a communion of perfect love between Father, Son and Spirit.

Our own road to solidarity can perhaps begin with a reflection on the following questions:

- Can I look back at my life and appreciate the many times when God was with me in my difficulties?
- Is there an opportunity now for me to be with someone in need?
- Am I always too busy with my own life to reach out to those who are suffering and be present to them?



YOUR ADVENT BOOKLET: The Advent 2007 Reflection is on the theme "Awaken to Love" and consists of reflections on what it means to stay awake and to respond to the love that God is offering us. Do remember to pick up a copy of the Advent 2007 Reflection booklet from your parish.

Reach out and help

THIS Advent, many parishes are supporting various charitable organisations in projects to promote charitable giving. Here are some of them:

The Church of the Holy Family is supporting its neighbouring Marine Parade Family Service Centre by raising funds and volunteers for its many family programmes.

The Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is supporting the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ACMI) by raising funds and volunteers for its various programmes for migrant workers.

The Church of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is supporting Morning Star Community Services by raising funds and volunteers for its children, youth and family programmes.

The Church of St Francis of Assisi is supporting the Roman Catholic Prison Ministry by raising funds and volunteers for its prison programmes.

The Church of St Vincent de Paul is supporting the Family Life Society by raising funds and volunteers for its many family programmes.

The Cathedral of the Good Shepherd has adopted the Catholic AIDS Response Effort and is raising funds and promoting the programmes of CARE.

You are encouraged to support these projects generously with your time and money. You can also contribute to other Catholic charities under the CSCC umbrella.

You may find out more of these projects at www.cscs-singapore.org

Who is my neighbour?



By Diana Quek
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Fund-Raising Committee

"Whatever you did for one of these least brothers or sisters of Mine, you did for Me." Matthew 25 : 40

TWO key themes that resonate with all Catholics are the protection of human dignity and the care for God's creations.

As Catholics it is our obligation to reach out to the less fortunate and do all we can to help them.

We should do so starting with our neighbours, those we come into contact with in our daily lives. But

there are many more out there whom we do not come into contact with.

And we can sometimes be so caught up with the demands of daily living that we forget there are many less fortunate than us, struggling to eke a living, abused or suffering from a terminal disease.

The Church provides an organised way to serve those in need in the community through our various social and community organisations.

By giving our time and money to these groups, we will have a more direct effect on the lives of the poor and those less fortunate.

Giving should be all year round. But during Advent, as we reflect on His coming, we should be especially reminded of His commandment to love the least of our neighbours.

Towards this end, CSCC has facilitated Advent charity projects with



several parishes.

I encourage you to respond to the calls at these parishes and with charities in general, to give thanks for the blessings in your life - your family, your friends, your talents.

Think seriously about the kind of legacy, based on your Christian values, that you would want to leave behind.

For in the words of St Paul: "What have we got that we have not received?" We would have nothing, if not for Him.