



OUR SOCIAL MISSION

BY CARITAS SINGAPORE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Find ways to put Catholic Social Teaching into action

Some still think the Church's Social Teachings are its best kept secret. As Catholics, we are all called to respond to social problems and each of us can find ways to do so

THERE were some hard issues to confront when 22 young Catholics attended a recent workshop on Catholic Social Teaching with Father David Garcia.

He challenged them to think about how the Catholic faith calls them to respond when confronted with social problems such as days off for maids, child labour, the income gap and working and living with those who are mentally challenged or living with AIDS.

These were some of the real-life issues he raised through case studies to explain the Catholic Social Teaching at a workshop for young adults.

The introductory workshop came about after a group of 32 young adults met in February for an evening of discussion organised by Caritas Singapore to encourage young people to take part in the Church's social mission. Participants realised they were not all that clear about the social teachings, which some have described as the Church's



Father David Garcia put real-life issues to participants of a recent workshop, and asked how they could apply the Church's Social Teachings in different situations. Said Diane Choo, a full-time counsellor at Catholic Junior College: "The workshop solidified my vague ideas on what our religion teaches about living in society. This has given me a roadmap on how I want to strive to live my life."

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These teachings are meant to help Catholics apply their faith in day-to-day situations. The case studies that Fr Garcia presented at the workshop prompted discussion on key principles, such as the Dignity of the Human Person and the Principle of the Common Good. The first states that each person is unique and should be treated

with equal dignity as anyone else. The second states that we should seek the welfare of the broader community, and not just our own interests.

According to the teaching about the Dignity of the Human Person, the elderly, poor and mentally challenged - who tend to be marginalised in society - have a right to be treated like everyone else and not be

discriminated against. But at the same time, as one workshop participant pointed out, all of us have the right to choose who we want to work and associate with.

It became clear to those present that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching are a challenge to put into practice. But they also left the three-hour workshop with good ideas on

how to put their faith into action.

"It was a great, comprehensive session that spoke about relevant and pressing topics, enlightening me on how our faith can guide us and be the missing piece when we try to address global solutions," said Chew Jia Ling, 24, who works in a bank and attends the Church of St Ignatius.

Erwin Susanto, 23, found the case studies interesting. "The child labour story presented an interesting and difficult, if not controversial, case about how challenging social problems can be because of the complexity and 'inter-connectivity' with other problems such as poor governance and economic poverty," said Erwin, a National University of Singapore student. "It is also difficult to find a quick, one-size-fits-all solution and sometimes we have to accept approaches that are inconvenient and costly. We must be prepared to embrace other people's problems."

Diane Choo, 29, a full-time counsellor at Catholic Junior College, said: "The workshop solidified my vague ideas on what our religion teaches about living in society. This has given me a roadmap on how I want to strive to live my life. All working adults should learn the 10 principles of Social Teaching to give us an anchor on how to live practically in Christ within our society."

REFLECT



▲ Principle of the Universal Destination of Goods

Poor people in third world countries are dying because they cannot afford the drugs they need. But drug companies argue that they have to price their products high to cover the costs of research and development. They are not willing to allow others to copy their drugs. Should companies be obliged to share their life-saving inventions, even if it causes them to lose money?

▼ Dignity of Creation

Should our country protect and conserve nature at all costs? Or is it right to use our resources to feed, clothe, shelter and provide a good quality of life for our people? How do we strike a balance?



► Principle of Participation

Many ex-convicts, handicapped and people with HIV want to work and earn a respectable income and contribute to society like everyone else. But not all employers want to hire them. How can society include these people? Must employers be forced to accept them?

► Principle of the Dignity of Human Work

Many maids work for an entire week without a day's rest. More pregnant women are unfairly dismissed by their companies. Have we become more concerned about productivity and less about the human person?



► Principle of Promotion of Peace

Ever so often we hear of youth engaged in violent activities. Although society is quick to condemn young people who use violence, it often sends a contradictory message by its acceptance of legalised violence such as capital punishment, abortion and war. The media also often portray the use of violence in a way that makes it seem acceptable or even heroic. Do we, in our thoughts, words and actions also promote such messages of violence? Have we been promoters of peace?

