

Catholic Social Services  
**Victoria**



*The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the followers of Christ*

(Gaudium et Spes, 1965, para 1)

## **Reflections on Catholic Social Teaching**

by Denis Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Catholic Social Services Victoria

Submitted to Faculty of Theology, KU Leuven, 14 October 2009, as part of Catholic Social Services Australia Enrichment Leave Program, 2009

### **Summary**

The CSSA program exposed us to several accounts of the development of Catholic social teaching, and to close engagement with several texts, including *Gaudium et Spes* from the Second Vatican Council and two recent encyclicals, *Deus Caritas Est* (2005) and *Caritas in Veritate* (2009). The program also included visits to agencies that are applying Catholic social teaching in their work.

We were left with a picture that is rich, and complex, and of Catholic social teaching as alive and developing. Differences in emphasis at various times, and differences in interpretation are opportunities to deepen our understanding of the whole.

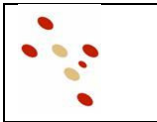
Among particular themes that had some prominence during the program were the inter-relationship between charity and justice, the environment, acknowledgement of mistakes, and the Church and material wealth. The principles are not separable: the dignity of the human person, justice, the common good, subsidiarity, solidarity and an option for the poor are all inter-related.

‘See, judge, act’ is a methodology for applying the principles and methods of Catholic social teaching, but there is no simple calculus to be applied. Wisdom and patience are among the qualities to be brought to the task. But act we must.

Next steps towards more effective engagement with Catholic social teaching might include, at the personal level, a focus on character and formation; ‘leadership spirituality’, including changing perspective, contemplation and meditation; deepening one’s relationship with God; and further study.

At the organisational level further steps include:

- Continued exposure to organisations that apply Catholic social teaching
- Recruiting people who share the vision, and staff development
- Shared prayer, where appropriate
- Including Catholic social teaching as part of a dialogue with the Bishops, and a bridge to Parish communities.



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## Introduction

### ***Enrichment program***

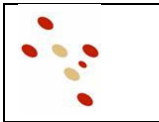
This report presents reflections on Catholic social teaching, as part of the enrichment program on Catholic Identity in Social Services conducted for Catholic Social Services Australia in Rome and Leuven during September/October 2009.

The program itself involved several days of meetings, visits etc in Rome during 15-20 September 2009<sup>1</sup>, followed by a structured program organised by the Catholic University of Leuven, from 21 September to 16 October 2009, which included the following elements:

- Lectures and discussions
- Visits to agencies and programs in a range of cities
- Visits to museums, tourist sites, including presentations on particular buildings, works of art, battlefield graves, etc
- Organised and informal interaction within the Australian group, including structured reflections on the program
- Liturgies and other prayer encounters, with the group and in broader settings.

### ***Why a report on Catholic social teaching?***

The topic of Catholic social teaching was chosen for this report for a number of reasons:



The issue is of keen interest to my own organisation, Catholic Social Services Victoria. The websites of various Catholic social service organisations include outlines of the principles of Catholic social teaching<sup>2</sup>, and the Preamble to our Constitution makes clear its centrality to the work of the organisation:

In supporting and enhancing the work of its members Catholic Social Services Victoria seeks to serve the poor, the marginalised and the disadvantaged by drawing upon the gospel values enshrined in Catholic Social Teaching.<sup>3</sup>

Among my own aims in participating in the course were to ‘gain a better understanding of the development and application of Catholic social teaching’, and to ‘deepen my own spirituality, and its linkages with service and justice’<sup>4</sup>.

Above all Catholic social teaching was a major theme of the program. It was addressed as a broad theme in a number of presentations, and was part of the background for many others, as well as for many site and program visits. Course inputs with direct relevance to this report are listed at [Attachment 1](#). It was reflected on by program participants in formal and informal discussion. It was clear from the input and discussion over the past weeks that Catholic social teaching is a key element of the Catholic identity of social service organisations.

## **The development of Catholic social teaching**

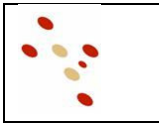
### ***A view from Rome***

The program’s focus on Catholic social teaching began in Rome, where meetings with the Pontifical Commissions *Cor Unum* and *Justice & Peace* both revolved around Catholic social teaching.

The Pontifical Commission for Justice & Peace is responsible for the 2004 publication *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which, following Pope John Paul II, organises the Catholic social teaching around the four principles of dignity of the human person, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. Cardinal Martino strongly recommended the *Compendium* to us.

At *Cor Unum*, we spoke about the key themes of the 2005 encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, for which Cardinal Cordes provided some of the initial drafting; and of the fact that Charity is central to the mission of the Church – people meet God through the works of the Church. We agreed that this encyclical had been very well received. Cardinal Cordes spoke about the issues they are engaged with as part of the follow up to *Deus Caritas Est*, including spiritual development of those working on behalf of the Church, in order that people can give themselves in their service.

It was clear too that issues currently being addressed by these offices – climate change, refugees etc – were being analysed in an environment where the world of politics is moving quickly – encyclicals, etc could provide only a general framework for the work that is being done.



## **Paris**

During a presentation given to us in Paris, Fr Jean-Yves Calvez SJ took a long term perspective. Reflecting on half a century of interest and involvement in the issue - his first textbook on Catholic Social Teaching was published in 1959 – he began with a broad overview:

- Official social teaching is the fruit of reflection in a number of countries, forums etc.
- It began with Jesus and the apostles, proceeded through the Fathers of the Church, Aquinas et al,
- Leo XIII commenced the series of Social Encyclicals, with *Rerum Novarum*, in 1891.

*Rerum Novarum* demonstrated the multifaceted inputs into such a document: for example, the idea of unions of workers – later seen as central to the document - was a late insertion at the suggestion of Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore. Calvez led us through other such interventions, including during the drafting of *Gaudium et Spes*, where he had some personal involvement.

The Dominican Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990) led a later critique of the process when in 1979 he published a book that equated social doctrine with ideology. He argued that social teaching needed to follow an inductive model, such as had been advocated at the Second Vatican Council and adopted in *Populorum Progressio* (1967) etc, “as opposed to older, more deductively abstract approach to social doctrine, which he described as ideology”.<sup>5</sup>

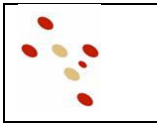
Nor do all documents that contribute to the broader Church emanate from the Vatican. ‘*Justice in the World*’, the main document arising from the 1971 Synod of Bishops, is a major statement of the bishops of the world, and ‘*Economic Justice for all*’ was a major statement released by the US Catholic Bishops in 1986. Bishops also comment and advise, often on areas of particular concern to their own communities. [The annual Social Justice Sunday statements by the Australian Bishops Conference can be seen in this context.]

Calvez characterised the Church’s approach to Catholic social teaching since the mid-twentieth century as taking major issues in the world and analysing them to their foundations. ‘Reform of the enterprise’, development, decolonialisation, and then at the time of the Council, Human Rights, democracy, international society, war and peace.

The Church should stay away from party politics, but it can’t stay away from the issues: As the opening words of *Gaudium et Spes* resounded in 1965:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the followers of Christ.<sup>6</sup>

In more recent years, Calvez saw fewer issues that were new, and thus less major developments in social teaching.



He spoke about *Caritas in Veritate*, which, he thought, reflected the character of Pope Benedict XVI. Its foundation is in theology, not economics. It is much more anthropocentric, more theological than any former social encyclical. There had been theoretical views developed before, but the current Pope has taken this much further. He wants to ground economics in the relationship of human beings to God. He wants to make it clear that Caritas, and the specific recommendations around it, are grounded in the roots of Christianity.

The document also brings development back into the picture, despite its being ignored by the secular culture. And it reflects on what makes society work – which the Pope analyses as ‘gift’, or gratuitousness.

We were in awe that Calvez had participated in the development of much of what he spoke about.

## **Leuven**

Several presentations at Leuven also took an overview of Catholic social teaching.

Professor Johan Verstraeten’s presentation on our first day on ‘perspectives in Catholic social ethics’ covered some of the same ground as that of Fr Calvez, and the two sessions reinforced each other.

He led us through the developments over time of key areas of emphasis:

- See, judge, act – *Mater et Magister* (1961)
- Scrutinizing the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel - *Gaudium et Spes* (1965)
- Its up to the Christian communities to scrutinize issues under local conditions - *Octogesima Adveniens*, (1971)

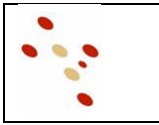
Vatican II stressed the deep bonds between the Church and humankind, and the primacy of action and witnessing. This work is done with others, and it is a living tradition. It needs to reflect on itself, and be interested in what is positive in the world.

It is not productive to have separate modes of expression for Christians and for others. Our insights should be of value to and available to all, for example:

- Grotius’ ‘non combatant immunity’ in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, to
- The value of palliative care, and
- A new diplomacy, eg, as practiced by Sant’Egidio Community

Ellen van Stichel, a doctoral student of Johan Verstraeten, later presented a grand tour of social philosophy over the past 50 years and of Catholic social teaching on justice since *Rerum Novarum*.

Her philosophical preference is for a form of ‘cosmopolitanism’. In general, this was characterised as every human being has equal dignity, and is a subject of our moral concern – the starting point is the people, not us. She prefers the version that justice must start from this basis (Nussbaum). This is contrasted with charity, which she saw as supererogatory – ie, beyond what is required.



She presented the Christian tradition as intrinsically cosmopolitan, growing out of Jewish inspiration, such as that of Amos (5:24):

Let justice roll down like water, Righteousness like a fast flowing stream.

The treatment of the poor is the measure of faithfulness. Love and justice are closely connected: God's love empowers us to do justice. The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) was presented as an inspiration, and a clarion call of justice:

He puts forth his arm in strength  
and scatters the proud-hearted.  
He casts the mighty from their thrones  
and raises the lowly.  
He fills the starving with good things,  
sends the rich away empty.

*Justice in the world* (1971)<sup>7</sup> was lauded:

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.

Professor Mathijs Lamberigts later spoke to us in some detail about the genesis, substance and legacy of *Gaudium et Spes*, the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, the document of the Second Vatican Council that was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on 7 December 1965.

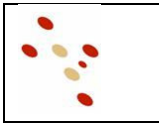
Among other things, that presentation added further to our understanding of the process that can underpin the emergence of such a document – this is necessarily messy, and recalls the dictum generally attributed to Otto von Bismarck that 'Laws are like sausages, it is better not to see them being made.'

Professor Lamberigts outlined the procedural issues that needed to be addressed to commence consideration of the Schema that led to *Gaudium et Spes*, and the contrasting views of the relationship between the Church and the world that were at issue: in short, if one gives too much emphasis to the Church as 'societas perfecta' or as self-sufficient, and to the world as a dangerous place, which were part of the neo-scholastic environment of the 1930's and 1940's when most of the bishops would have been educated, then the starting point of the situation of the world, of an openness to dialogue, and of an inductive approach to issues would be counter-intuitive.

The document that was negotiated over seven drafts and adopted during the last weeks of the Council, some three years after the opening of the Council, is today part of the heritage of the Church.

Dr Greg Moses, a participant in the course, in his submission to KU Leuven as part of the requirements of the course, commented on the links between the most recent social encyclical, the 2009 *Caritas in Veritate*, and the broader tradition:

There is also a strong defence of the right of the Church and of Christians as such, to play a public role in the construction of the polis and for the sake of integral human development... We are still into charity, but now it includes



justice and the fight for integral human development of the whole person and of all peoples.

There is the recognition in paragraph 12 that papal encyclicals are a service within an open and dynamic tradition.

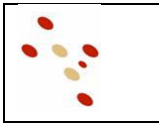
Then there is that passage which looks suspiciously like the much quoted passage from *Justice in the World*, in paragraph 15, where Benedict is appropriating *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, italics in the original, “*Testimony to Christ’s charity, through works of justice, peace and development, is part and parcel of evangelization*, because Jesus Christ, who loves us, is concerned with the whole person... the Church’s social doctrine, which is an essential element of evangelization”.<sup>8</sup>

## Some principles and issues of Catholic social teaching

Verstraeten reflected on some of the principles of Catholic social teaching:

- The common good: The good of the individual and the good of society are linked. This is different to Rawls, or to utilitarianism.
- Justice: Verstraeten presented social justice as the conjunction of the classical concepts of general or contributive justice, distributive justice, and commutative justice (or business ethics).
  - He was disappointed that ‘Pope Benedict doesn’t talk about justice’, and that poor people are spoken of as the beneficiaries of assistance - there is more to it than that.
  - He sees a need to rebalance the making of policy here, a tendency to put aside the heritage of Helder Camara, Oscar Romero and Pope Paul VI.
  - [See further discussion below on [Charity and Justice](#)]
- Human rights: based on human dignity – the minimum condition for life in community. Catholic ethics has contributed to a reinterpretation of human rights in a communitarian framework – the group heard more of this later from Professor [Johan De Tavernier](#), in the context of environmental issues.
- A preferential option for the poor.
- Charity: to be distinguished from giving because of a bad conscience. Nor is giving or contributing on a secular basis enough: for example, is *Medecins sans Frontiers* sustainable?
- Solidarity
- Subsidiarity – that higher levels have a duty to intervene where needed, but only where needed.

These principles are interconnected: you can’t separate them out from justice, or from one another. They must be used with wisdom, and always in connection with people and their situation – see notes below on [Application of Catholic social teaching](#)



The principle of solidarity was expanded on for us at Caritas Internationalis:

Solidarity with the poor, however, is not only about being personally close to them, it is also about attending to the human causes of poverty in the world. It is right therefore that in this reflection we also consider our role in trying to establish a more just world. Justice and human promotion are an indispensable part of the mission of the Church, which is an advocate of the poor.<sup>9</sup>

Lamberigts later devoted time to outlining some of the key substantive issues of *Gaudium et Spes*:

- The imperative of addressing widespread hunger and deprivation in the world, in an environment where the developed world has never been wealthier.
- The church is at the service of the poor.
- Issues arising from migration, the explosion of mass communications, the impact on cultural change of technological advancement, and weapons of mass destruction, etc.
- The importance of literature and art to the work of evangelisation.
- relates to other documents, eg, *Pacem in Terris* (1963), which for the first time was addressed to ‘all men of good will’<sup>10</sup> and which delves into such issues as relations between nations, human rights and duties, role of women, decolonialisation, self-determination, disarmament.

## **Charity and Justice**

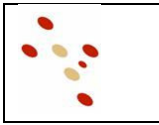
Van Stichel noted that the *Compendium* (2004) moved from justice to love, and argued that the second part of *Deus Caritas Est* (2005) is problematic. It portrays Caritas as essential for the Church, and of global application. It sees justice as structural, and charity as personal, the former the concern of the state, and the latter the concern of the Church. The role of the Church in relation to justice is to teach principles, and to form consciences of lay people.

Catholic agencies are frustrated at this – does it mean back to voluntarism? Where is participation? There are parallels between *Deus Caritas Est* and the philosophical debate around justice, love and charity. Justice as participation is the better position.

Not all commentators had been as critical, as our own comments in Rome had indicated.

Professor Annemie Dillen, in her presentation on the concept of ‘Caritas’ noted that ‘[*Deus Caritas Est*] is a milestone in thinking on caritas: the charitable mission can no longer be considered secondary or as something which others could do equally well, but it is essential for the being of the Church.’<sup>11</sup> and she went on to make the link between Caritas and justice. In a separate session, Dillen also noted the importance of the point made by Emmanuel Levinas, that it is the little acts of kindness that can make such a difference to people – this by way of complementing the broader theories of the essential nexus between charity and justice.

Fr Calvez had noted that “The Church should stay away from party politics, but it can’t stay away from the issues”, which seems to be aligned with *Deus Caritas Est*:



The Church “cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.” (n 29a). Her role in this is

- Rational argument – the Church’s social doctrine has become a set of fundamental guidelines offering approaches that are valid even beyond the confines of the Church: in the face of ongoing development these guidelines need to be addressed in the context of dialogue with all those seriously concerned for humanity and for the world in which we live (n27).
- Reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice cannot prevail.
- A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply (n28a).

Pope Benedict returned to related themes in *Caritas in Veritate* earlier this year, and, as noted, Professor Verstraeten had expressed disappointment at the approach taken.

Moses analysed *Caritas in Veritate* in terms different from Verstraeten, and consistent with the comments of Calvez. He argues that the encyclical is grounded strongly in the language of ‘justice’, from the second sentence on:

“Love – caritas – is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace.” This is picked up again, and its relationship to charity clarified once and for all, in paragraph 6; “Charity goes beyond justice... but it never lacks justice... justice is inseparable from charity and intrinsic to it. Justice is the primary way of charity...” etc., etc, very clear and beyond all doubt. This is also picked up in the next paragraph, on the importance of *the common good*, introduced as a requirement of justice and charity. Later on, paragraph 35, justice is explained in the traditional manner, commutative, distributive and social. Overall, the language of justice seems to dominate over the language of solidarity, still there, e.g. in paragraph 58, but mostly absorbed into the language of justice and charity and the new item, gratuitousness.<sup>12</sup>

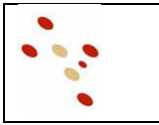
The essentiality of justice was a major theme in many of the social programs that were visited during the program. At the Fourth World foundation outside Paris, at the homelessness centre in Gent, at the Little Sisters of Nazareth in Gent, at Welzijnzorg in Brussels, etc, the importance of justice and the insufficiency of charity on its own, were emphasised, along with the importance of involving fully the people with whom one works.

## **Reflections on some particular Issues:**

### **Environment**

We gained a clear sense that recognition is escalating within the Church of the importance of the environment as a moral and social issue.

This was apparent before our Leuven program commenced: Justice and Peace in Rome identified it as one of their core current issues; Caritas Internationalis did



likewise, locating the issue in terms of the impact on the lives of those most in need around the world. *Caritas in Veritate* devoted a section to aspects of the issue.

At Leuven this trend was further evident. One of our interlocutors, Professor Jacques Haers SJ, has reduced his academic workload to enable him to focus on the issue at the European level, and to mobilise effort within his order, and within the Church.

In his presentation on ‘Environmental concerns in the Catholic Church’ Professor Johan De Tavernier took a broad view of current issues. He saw some of the roots of the current crisis in the Romantic focus on the self as the determinant of good and bad, combined with an economic system that tends not to assign personal costs - and thus, often, responsibility - for ‘public goods’.

Another way of looking at this is to consider the link between rights and duties in a society. If rights are stressed, then there can develop an approach that loses any objectivity to good and bad, as opposed to an ethic based on virtues. There are, he would argue, objective obligations in relation to the environment, and a malaise is inevitable if there is a reliance on each person deciding whether they feel like making a change – he saw the impact of Al Gore’s ‘An inconvenient truth’ as greatly reduced because of this prevailing cultural setting.

De Tavernier saw *Caritas in Veritate*, with its chapter devoted to the environment, as making a useful contribution in focusing on some basic issues<sup>13</sup>. He was not concerned that the encyclical did not directly address the issue of climate change, and he anticipated something more substantial from the Pope on creation and the environment down the track.

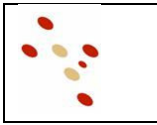
Haers took a different view of the current Vatican position. He thought it was clear that it was a priority issue for the Pope, and drew attention to the Pope’s meeting with the French President 12 months ago, when he identified the state of the planet as one of the key issues for our time (along with, for Europe, the struggles of young people; the gap between rich and poor in Western society, the promotion of human rights, and the building of peace within Europe, and the world).

Mr President, I am also concerned about the state of our planet. With great generosity, God has entrusted to us the world that he created. We must learn to respect and protect it more. It seems to me that the time has come for more constructive proposals so as to guarantee the good of future generations.<sup>14</sup>

Haers stressed the need to be developing theological positions, and engaging, with humour and wisdom, within the Church and beyond – there are no short cuts. He saw the Vatican currently seemingly unable to address population issues – the elephant in the room. A greater focus on the social reality as part of the process of reflection and analysis was needed. Haers wasn’t convinced by the discussion on this point in *Caritas in Veritate*, where the current Catholic position on population control is vigorously argued, and economic arguments against population growth are contended with.

### **Acknowledging and building from our own mistakes as Church**

A number of presenters and a number of course participants raised issues of injustice within the Church, of the misuse of power, the lack of transparency, etc. Many have



clearly been deeply hurt by this. Many also feel deeply for those who have been sexually abused by Church people.

Others have noted that we are all part of the Church, an important part, and that we are the face of the Church to many; that we and our services are a bridge that can enable people to make or re-make contact with the Church.

For those working within the Church to be truly at home, and to be able to reach out as part of the Church to others, we need to ensure that our own actions are aligned with the requirements of justice, and of Catholic social teaching more generally. This is the case in our dealings within the Church, and our dealings with those outside the Church. This is important in all areas of work, but the links to work for justice and service are perhaps even clearer: our work and exhortation to justice will remain limited if we ourselves are associated with injustice.<sup>15</sup> The experience of members of this CSSA group, as articulated during the program, is that we have much to do to achieve best practice.

A more general principle is also emerging: that the whole church (thus including those who work for justice and in charity from within the Church) be conscious of our own limitations and of the injustices of the past, that we repent where necessary, and that we make a commitment to improvement.

As members of the Church we are painfully aware that we are flawed, as individuals and collectively. Not all of our endeavours have had positive outcomes, not all have helped others. This awareness of imperfection, and efforts to address it, began with St Peter – it is not new. But the Second Vatican Council articulated this issue more clearly for the current time:

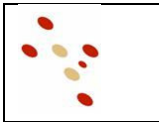
...the Church, embracing in its bosom sinners, at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal. ... By the power of the risen Lord it is given strength that it might, in patience and in love, overcome its sorrows and its challenges, both within itself and from without, and that it might reveal to the world, faithfully though darkly, the mystery of its Lord until, in the end, it will be manifested in full light.<sup>16</sup>

The public acknowledgement of fault, and commitment to renewal, gained momentum under Pope John Paul II. In 1994, when calling on the Church to prepare for the millennial year 2000, marking two thousand years of Christianity, one of the points that he stressed was

...it is appropriate that, as the Second Millennium of Christianity draws to a close, the Church should become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel and, instead of offering to the world the witness of a life inspired by the values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly forms of counter-witness and scandal.<sup>17</sup>

One of the main reasons this is necessary is to enable us to do better in the future:

Acknowledging the weaknesses of the past is an act of honesty and courage which helps us to strengthen our faith, which alerts us to face today's temptations and challenges and prepares us to meet them "Christians need to place themselves humbly before the Lord and examine themselves on the responsibility which they too have for the evils of our day."<sup>18</sup>



Pope Benedict XVI, in Sydney in 2008 for World Youth Day, developed this theme in relation to sexual abuse within the church. In a homily to Bishops, priests and seminarians, he said:

Here I would like to pause to acknowledge the shame which we have all felt as a result of the sexual abuse of minors by some clergy and religious in this country.

Indeed, I am deeply sorry for the pain and suffering the victims have endured, and I assure them that, as their Pastor, I too share in their suffering.

These misdeeds, which constitute so grave a betrayal of trust, deserve unequivocal condemnation. They have caused great pain and have damaged the Church's witness.<sup>19</sup>

He called for a forward program of redress and improvement.

These principles of acknowledgement, repentance, reparation and improvement have thus developed over recent decades within the Church, at the highest levels. They would seem to be, in fact, part of the corpus of social teaching, of teaching about justice, which is the patrimony of us all.

Johan Verstraeten touched on this in seeing as a requirement for a leadership spirituality the creation of 'space for forgiveness, redemption'. He saw this as counter-cultural – he sees a gap in this area in the business community.

## **The wealth of the Church**

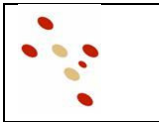
The material splendours of the Vatican, and those of various other churches in Rome and other cities, focused many of our group on the issue of the Church's material wealth. The magnificent art collections in the Vatican Museum and elsewhere raised similar issues, perhaps more starkly because of the less direct religious purpose of this material.

A key goal of religious art is to raise our hearts and minds to God, and to lead us to deeper reflection on matters of faith and love. The secular work in the Vatican Museum displays the greatness of the human artistic achievement. What achievement!

But concern for the dignity of each person, including those without sufficient material resources for a decent life; solidarity between nations and cultures; and a preferential option for the poor would argue for some use of the funds associated with these treasures to meeting the basic needs of those in extreme poverty, or of development more generally.<sup>20</sup>

Tim Fisher, Australia's Ambassador to the Holy See, addressed this issue when he spoke to the group: shouldn't the Church sell off the collections of the Vatican etc, and use the proceeds to address pressing human needs? His main points were that any one off large scale expenditure would have only a modest positive impact on the people of the world; and that the art etc is part of the patrimony of the world, that should not be disbursed.

But it seems unlikely that the current holdings of the Church are at an optimal level. Would a review be out of place? Perhaps a program of selling off some works to public museums around the world, to generate a fund for relief and development?



Perhaps the bottom line, too, is that all of us need to be conscious of alternative uses of all the funds and assets that pass our way.

## Application of Catholic social teaching

Catholic social teaching provides a framework for analysis of the world; and for determining what can be done about a given situation.

‘**See, Judge, Act**’ is the methodology for interacting with and changing society that Cardinal Joseph Cardijn (1882 – 1967) taught in his Young Christian Worker movement, and which *Mater et Magister* in 1961 saw as the ‘stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice’<sup>21</sup>.

It is an approach that lends itself to many settings. One of the members of the group, a former member of Young Christian Workers, related how her earlier exposure to this framework had changed her life, and she applied it during the program to analyse the impact and implications of the program for her. One of her ‘actions’ arising was to ‘reaccept her Cardijn calling’.

‘**Reading the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel**’ is also associated with the utilisation of Catholic social teaching.

Lamberigts stressed that *Gaudium et Spes*, the document that launched that phrase, is not an end point. Its contents point to the future, and to an ongoing process: It is the people ‘of this age’ whose joys and griefs we must share, so a process of discernment needs to be continued. ‘Reading the signs of the times in light of the gospel’ cannot be done once and for all. It is something that the Church – we – are called to undertake in our own situation, and at appropriate times.

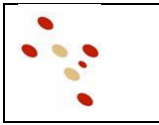
This can be assisted and guided by the analysis and reflection that has been undertaken by others in the Catholic social teaching tradition, and in other settings. The various encyclicals, statements by Bishops Conferences etc are not just statements of abstract principle. They address issues, at the international and the national level, often in some depth, and often, across various documents, over time. There is also much secondary literature around this.

Johan Verstraeten noted the need to apply the principles in connection with **people and their situation**, and that they are **interconnected**: you can’t separate them out from justice, or from one another.

He also warned that the principles must always be **used with wisdom**. This is a challenging and demanding requirement. The application of wisdom to a situation or issue requires that one be wise, which very few can rightly claim to be all of the time. Working with others is one way of increasing the chances of meeting this requirement; working within a tradition that one has familiarised oneself with would seem to be useful; and developing the ability to undertake discernment would also be a necessary pre-condition.

There is clearly no quick fix. But the Cardijn methodology highlights the need to progress through to the stage of taking action:

**See:** The principles can be used to help **identify issues** to be addressed – a first level of issue screening. We all have limited time, so where will that time be focused? An issue or situation that one is aware of, or that is offered as an area of focus, can be



considered against the principles of Catholic social teaching to provide some indication of priority. Perception and insight – wisdom, according to Professor Haers – are needed to do this effectively.

Related to the stage of issue identification is the importance of facing issues, of **addressing the world as it is**. This is a methodological point that emerged in many of our presentations as a feature of the study of theology at Leuven. Among other things, it is a call for moral courage – sometimes it is easier to ignore an issue, or a troublesome aspect of an issue.

Haers also had advice on how to go about this:

- You need to spend as much time in building the community that addresses the issues as in addressing the issues.
- Who do we forget when we create identity, address issues? Who do we leave out? What are the forgotten voices?
- Our analysis and our basis for moving forward will be impaired if we work “Not ‘to’, not just ‘with’, but ‘with - for’ the society”.

He drew further on his Ignatian heritage in outlining the alignment of Common Apostolic Discernment – the process by which Ignatius’ first companions took the decision to build a new identity – with his theory of identity through relationships. Features that were introduced included ‘sitting together’ with issues that have no defined solution; considering ‘how is God through each one of us addressing all of us’; and ‘how is God trying to speak through me to others?’ How do we listen to God here?

**Judge:** And the same principles can then be applied to the analysis of an issue, and to determining what might be done. This is, of course, complex. In relation to environmental issues, Professor Haers noted the need for humility and patience.

The discussion above on wisdom applies here as well. There is clearly no quick fix. But the Cardijn methodology highlights the need to progress through to the stage of **taking action**.

The last of Verstraeten’s principles can thus be seen to apply: there will always be creative tensions: we have to live with paradox and tension. There will be tensions between the need for analysis and consultation, and the need to take action; between the emphases indicated by one principle over another, etc.

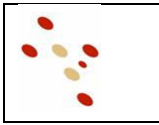
## **Next steps**

### **The personal dimension**

#### **Character and formation:**

Several presentations stressed the importance of the character and formation of the person who is called on to undertake ethical analysis or make ethical judgements, which is an important dimension of what is involved in the application of Catholic social teaching.

In a comprehensive presentation on ‘An Ethical Model for Health and Welfare Care’ Professor Axel Liegeois outlined that the first pre-condition of the model was that of



‘adopting attitudes’, which translated in practice to having good, ie virtuous, people involved in the analysis. How do we advance ourselves towards this? Aristotle<sup>22</sup> argued that we do so through understanding the virtues, and developing the habit of acting in accordance with them.

### **‘Leadership spirituality’**

Professor Johan Verstraeten addressed the same issue from a different perspective with a focus on ‘leadership spirituality’. A fundamental point of his analysis was that without a focus on spirituality, leaders could not in fact provide what is needed by society: a person who can look into an uncertain future and have the courage to act.’ And action is what Catholic social teaching leads us to.

Verstraeten saw leadership as exhibited in how we behave, and saw that a ‘fairly simple’. We should put first things first; and focus on what really matters (as Ignatius and, later, Stephen Covey, understood well.) The more we can help others get attuned to themselves and open to creativity, then the more productive the whole will become.

There were three main steps required for leaders to build the necessary relationships in order to reconnect themselves with reality, with the other, and with God:

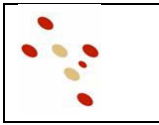
1. change perspective: move from the language of utility to the language of understanding and change; read the gospels again, and other texts; listen to music; read poetry
2. contemplation: only the contemplative person can be prudent
  - looking at reality as it really is
  - acting in harmony with reality
  - patience – the courage to wait for the right moment
  - opening oneself to the unexpected
3. meditation
  - confronting our own vulnerability, our darkness, building receptivity
  - via inner-life we become more connected to the world outside, but we end *dependency* on relationships
  - we mover to a culture of trust - trust with wisdom

These steps provide a self-development program that would overlap with Aristotle’s prescription of acting in accordance with the virtues.

### **Relationship with God**

Mention was made above of the focus at Cor Unum on spiritual development of those involved in service and justice, flowing from the analysis in *Deus Caritas Est*.

At Caritas Internationalis too we were exposed to a call to a deeper personal spirituality that was set out by Cardinal Rodriguez: A 2009 working document ‘Caritas – a sign of love for God’s humanity’ outlined and invited comment on the theology and spirituality underpinning their work. ‘Justice and human promotion are an indispensable part of the mission of the Church, which is the advocate of the poor’, wrote the Cardinal. And ‘When we encounter poverty and suffering, we find Jesus,



and in Jesus we find God...<sup>23</sup> The development of such an understanding is a project over time of spiritual growth.

This issue also arose on numerous other occasions. Although couched in non-religious terms, Verstraeten's leadership spirituality, following Stephen Covey, could be read as Christian, and calling for a deeper personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Others, such as discussion at Fourth World and the Little Sisters of Nazareth, made this call more explicit.

### **Further study**

The program challenged all participants to read and reflect more deeply in the whole area of Catholic social teaching, 'lest we remain superficial', as one participant put it. Professor Lamberigts was the strongest on this point, although it was implicit in many other presentations – they clearly expected that their listeners would have real familiarity with the texts they were quoting from.

### **Engagement at the Organisational level**

Many of the organisations encountered during the program were *applying Catholic social teaching* in their analysis and their work.

In our meeting with Caritas Internationalis the group was told that *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and the two recent encyclicals, *Deus Caritas Est* and *Caritas in Veritate* were key documents for the work of the organisation, as they addressed as priorities sustainable peace building, HIV/AIDS and health care, migration issues, and climate change impacts.

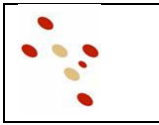
At Caritas Europa Adriana Opromolla, Social Policy Analyst, explained that their role includes translating the principles of Catholic social teaching into political arguments, and into popular presentations. She also explained that they are clear and open about this: we are Catholic, so we set out Catholic social teaching; when we have the opportunity to do this. Their advocacy documents include a front end on Catholic social teaching, where appropriate.

Johan Verstraeten quoted Sant'Egidio Community as making a contribution to the development of Catholic social teaching, by their development of a new form of peace making. "love of peace, and, flowing from that, work for peace", we were told at Sant'Egidio in Rome, is one of their principles.

These engagements with Catholic social teaching, and the associated spirituality, gave our group some common ground with these organisations. There were issues where we shared a common passion – spirituality, service, injustice and international solidarity. And there were pathways forward: cooperation across nations, groups and religions; advocacy growing out of service and analysis; deepening of our own commitment and spirituality.

Continued exposure to others is thus one pathway forward, for individuals and, with effort, their organisations.

Discussion among participants included reflection on how *relevant Catholic social teaching was* for Catholic social service organisations in Australia at this time.



One comment was that the whole field was richer and more complex than had previously been understood, and that we are part of it. It is, therefore imperative that we utilise the concepts. Others added that they had, over the course of the program, developed a deeper appreciation of what it had to offer, and of its being ‘alive’, growing and developing.

A slightly different view was that the language of Catholic social teaching might be too sanitized, too formal for use in inspiring staff. I think that most would agree with this: we need to use language that will resonate, or communication will not be effective. Each of us needs to reflect on the words and issues in order to make that translation. But there is much material to draw on- we don’t have to do it all ourselves.

One of our number commented that she had not previously had **formal lectures on Catholic social teaching**, and that she was very happy to have this redressed. This is an area where we might be able to be of service to others in our organisations and our network. One participant linked this with our duty to be as open as we can with our own people, to let them in on the substance of our work and our vision.

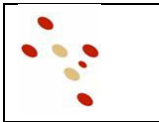
Some members of the group were able to report that their mission and values were currently the determinant of, for example, what work they take on; and that these values etc were aligned with Catholic social teaching. They saw a continuation of this approach as vindicated by the program.

**Recruiting people who share the vision, and staff development:** More generally, the personal dimension of further steps to be taken each have their organisational counterpart, in that it is not just ourselves but all relevant staff who we would want to be focused on leadership, discernment, etc; and be strengthening their capacity for ethical decision making. Advancing this is no small requirement. Within an organisation, it is something that can be taken into account at recruitment, and can be a focus of staff formation programs, but it is an ongoing, challenging journey. It is no less important for that.

**Shared prayer**, too, emerged as an element in considering issues of justice and beyond. Interestingly, this was not directly advocated, but introduced by example:

- Professor Reimund Bieringer introduced his session on scripture with a slide that contained a single verse: *For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come* (Hebrews 15:14). He didn’t speak to it, just left it on display for a moment. He simply told us that he always introduced his presentations with a verse from scripture.
- One member of our group concluded her presentation with a blessing that she was familiar with.
- Pope Benedict XVI concludes *Deus Caritas Est* with a prayer to the Virgin Mary.

My interpretation of Bieringer and the group member is that they felt free to pray as part of a presentation because they assessed that their audience would be broadly open to that. Similarly, Verstraeten was able to share with us the theological roots of his presentation. Again, discernment is needed.



Catholic social teaching is an area where the *Bishops of Australia* and the service and justice agencies are closely aligned – both see it as an important point of engagement with the broader society, and with our own people who might not have many links with other elements of the Church. The Leuven experience has reinforced for me that effective communication with Bishops is an important part of working within the Church. This close alignment on Catholic social teaching thus presents a ready opportunity for continued dialogue. Reporting back to them on this trip is part of that.

Nor, of course, is this a short term project. As one of the more experienced members of the group reminded us, trust and respect are important elements in such a relationship. And these need to be built over time.

Catholic social teaching could also be a *bridge to Parish communities*. There was significant discussion about how the work of justice and service is integral to the Church as a whole, and how Catholic social service organisations are part of that broad picture – we are not working independently of the people of the Church. But many of us do not have a lot of contact with the majority of Catholics, and many parish members are likely to be largely unaware of the work that is being undertaken on their behalf. A systematic engagement with parishes on Catholic social teaching and its applications is one way that such linkages could be built.



## **Attachment 1: Program inputs relating to Catholic Social Teaching**

### **Lectures, etc**

***Fr Jean-Yves Calvez SJ***

Friday 25 September, Paris  
The Social Ideas of the Catholic Church

***Fr Luc Dubrulle, Institute Catholique de Paris***

Friday 25 September, Paris  
Msgr Jean Rodham, Chair of Catholic Charities

***Prof Jacques Haers SJ***

Mon 21 Sept, Leuven  
Catholic identity of institutions and frontiers as space of encounter  
(Also joined small group at dinner, c Tues 6 October.)

***Prof Johan Verstraeten***

Mon 21 Sept, Leuven  
Perspectives in Catholic social ethics

Thurs 1 October, Leuven  
Spirituality of Leadership

***Prof Reimund Bieringer***

Mon 5 October, Leuven  
Biblical reflections on Catholic pastoral care

***Prof Axel Liegeois,***

Tues 29 Sept, Leuven  
An ethical model for health and welfare care

***Fr Daniel Alliet***

Tues 22 Sept, Leuven  
Presentation on 'open church' and reception of asylum seekers

***Professor Annemie Dillen***

Tues 22 Sept, Leuven  
Caritas in the Catholic church: basic ideas of Catholic pastoral care on personal and institutional level

Tuesday 6 October, Leuven  
Children, families and theology

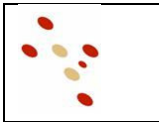
***Ellen Van Stichel***

Thurs 8 October, Leuven  
Diaconal aspects of the liturgy

### **Meetings with organisations**

***ATD – Fourth World***, near Paris

Sat 26 September  
Martine Courvoisier, et al. Separate notes available on this.



***Huize Triest – Community House, Gent***

Wed 30 September

Werner Van de Weghe

***Little Sisters of Nazareth, Gent***

Wed 30 September

Sr Magdalena, Sr Rita

also visited large Opportunity Shop that has spun off from parish there.

***Caritas Europa, Brussels***

Wed 23 Sept

***Caritas Flanders – lectures in Leuven***

Mon 28 Sept

Pieter Vandecasteele

***Caritas Internationalis, Rome***

Friday 18 September

Jacques Winter, Delores Halpin-Backman and Fr Pierre Chibambo

***Pontifical Commission Cor Unum, Rome***

President, Cardinal Cordes, and the under-Secretary, Msgr Giampietro Del Tol

Fri 18 September

***Pontifical Commission Justicia et Pax, Rome***

Cardinal Renato Martino

Friday 18 September

***Ambassador Tim Fisher, Rome***

Thurs 17 September

**Visits to service activities**

***Sant'Egidio Community, Rome***<sup>24</sup>

Thurs 17 September

Claudio, Analita and Roberto

***Welzijnszorg, Brussels***

Wed 23 September

Bent D'homolt; Danielle Col soul

***ACW (Catholic Labour Organisation), Brussels***

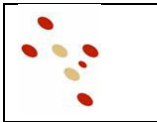
Wed 23 Sept

**Visits to Museum and war cemeteries, Ieper**

Wed 7 October

***'Tour of Hope' in the footsteps of Cardinal Cardijn, Brussels***

Wed 23 Sept



## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> See 'Rome: An overview of a visit', 28 September 2009 entry on <http://cssvic.blogspot.com/> for a report on the Rome leg of the program. Relevant parts of that report are also incorporated in this report.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.catholicsocialservices.org.au/Catholic\\_Social\\_Teaching](http://www.catholicsocialservices.org.au/Catholic_Social_Teaching)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.css.org.au/documents/cssv\\_constitution.pdf](http://www.css.org.au/documents/cssv_constitution.pdf) accessed 11 October 2009

<sup>4</sup> See 'Articulating hopes and expectations for involvement in the program', 14 September 2009 entry on <http://cssvic.blogspot.com/>

<sup>5</sup> Himes K, 'To Inspire and Inform', *America*, 6 June 2005, accessed 10 Oct 09 at [http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=4229](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=4229)

<sup>6</sup> Second Vatican Council *op cit*, n 1, p 199, 200.

<sup>7</sup> World Synod of Catholic Bishops "Justice in the World" 1971, para 6 at [http://www.osjspm.org/majordoc\\_justicia\\_in\\_mundo\\_official\\_test.aspx](http://www.osjspm.org/majordoc_justicia_in_mundo_official_test.aspx) accessed 13 October 2009.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

<sup>9</sup> Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez, Introductory letter in *Caritas – a sign of God's love for humanity*, Caritas International, 2009, p 2

<sup>10</sup> Pope John XXIII *Pacem In Terris* 1963, at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html) accessed 11 Oct 09

<sup>11</sup> A Dillen 'Caritas: 'Powerful' Ecclesiastical Salvific Action', paper distributed October 2009 to CSSA group, p 2

<sup>12</sup> G Moses 'Submission to KU Leuven at conclusion of Catholic Social Services Australia Enrichment Leave Program at K.U. Leuven, September-October 2009', unpublished.

<sup>13</sup> Chapter IV of *Caritas in Veritate* focuses on rights and duties; on the nature and dignity of the person; population issues in the context of true human dignity and the economics of population; the need for ethics in economics; nature as part of creation, with a purpose, and demanding respect, but not on a level higher than humanity; and on some specific issues: energy and resource depletion as issues of international justice as well as environmental concern; but "the decisive issue is the overall moral tenor of society" (n 52) – see [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html), accessed 11 Oct 09

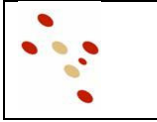
<sup>14</sup> Address Of Pope Benedict XVI, Elysée Palace, Paris, Friday, 12 September 2008 [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2008/september/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20080912\\_parigi-elysee\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080912_parigi-elysee_en.html) accessed 6 Oct 09

<sup>15</sup> This is, of course, not a new point – see, for example, World Synod of Catholic Bishops "Justice in the World" 1971, at [http://www.osjspm.org/majordoc\\_justicia\\_in\\_mundo\\_official\\_test.aspx](http://www.osjspm.org/majordoc_justicia_in_mundo_official_test.aspx) accessed 13 October 2009

<sup>16</sup> Dogmatic Constitution On The Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1964, para 8, accessed 4 Sept 09 [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vatii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vatii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)

<sup>17</sup> Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* Of His Holiness Pope John Paul II On Preparation For The Jubilee Of The Year 2000, 10 November 1994, Para 33, accessed 4 Sept 09 from [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_10111994\\_tertiomillennio-adveniente\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_10111994_tertiomillennio-adveniente_en.html)

<sup>18</sup> *op cit*, para 36



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<sup>19</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at Eucharistic Celebration with Bishops, Seminarians and Novices, Saint Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, Saturday, 19 July 2008, accessed 4 Sept 09 at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/homilies/2008/documents/hf\\_benxvi\\_hom\\_20080719\\_cathedral\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2008/documents/hf_benxvi_hom_20080719_cathedral_en.html)

<sup>20</sup> Again, not a new point – see, for example, World Synod of Catholic Bishops “Justice in the World” 1971, at [http://www.osjspm.org/majordoc\\_justicia\\_in\\_mundo\\_offical\\_test.aspx](http://www.osjspm.org/majordoc_justicia_in_mundo_offical_test.aspx) accessed 13 October 2009

<sup>21</sup> Pope John XXIII *Mater et Magister*, 1961, n 236, at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_15051961\\_mater\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater_en.html) accessed 11 Oct 09

<sup>22</sup> See eg Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by WD Ross, at [http://www.constitution.org/ari/ethic\\_00.htm](http://www.constitution.org/ari/ethic_00.htm) accessed 14 October 2009

<sup>23</sup> Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez, Introductory letter in *Caritas – a sign of God's love for humanity*, Caritas International, 2009, p 1

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/e/eyck\\_van/jan/09ghent/1open.html](http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/e/eyck_van/jan/09ghent/1open.html)