

Caritas Plymouth

Resources for Lent 2021

'He became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich' 2 Corinthians 8:9

The Lenten season provides an opportunity each year to deepen our understanding of our faith by reflecting on the Gospels. During Lent we are called both to turn away from those things that encumber our faith journey with God and to turn towards God. Lent is a wonderful opportunity to open ourselves to changes that God wants to make in us so that we can truly flourish. This note provides some resources for parishes and individuals to reflect on Catholic Social Teaching during Lent.

Cycle of Prayer

During lent we are asked to pray for the following intentions:

Candidates for the Sacraments, Women, the Needy and Hungry of the World and Penitents and Wanderers.

Women's World Day of Prayer is on 5th March, Lent Fast Day is Friday 26th February; we pray for Survivors of Sexual Abuse on Friday 26th March.

Catholic Social Teaching Podcasts

Whether you pray alone or are part of a prayer group that meets regularly, there are a range of short podcasts (3-4 minutes) on Catholic Social Teaching that could provide food for thought and discussion each week in lent:

www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk/resources/podcasts/

The topics included are:

- Human Dignity – Living Life to the Full
- An Economy for the Common Good
- Care for Creation
- Peacemaking – The Choice of Life or Death
- Solidarity
- The Value of Workers
- Community as a human family



The Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross are traditionally prayed on the Fridays of Lent. The Stations of the Cross began as the practice of pious pilgrims to Jerusalem who would retrace the final journey of Jesus Christ to Calvary. Later, for the many who wanted to pass along the same route, but could not make the trip to Jerusalem, a practice developed that eventually took the form of the fourteen stations currently found in almost every church. You can find prayers for the Stations of the Cross at: www.jesuit.org.uk/stations-cross

Fratelli Tutti

Pope Francis' latest Encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* (brothers and sisters all) could offer great material for reflection during the Lenten period. The Vatican has developed a website to offer insights and reflections into the key messages contained in the Encyclical Fratelli Tutti - www.humandevlopment.va/en.html

Live Simply

During Lent this year, try to apply Gandhi's famous words in your life: 'live simply so that others may simply live.' CAFOD have some super Lent 2021 resources to help young people to pray, learn and fundraise during Lent. They are asking schools to [Walk for Water](#) where sponsored walks will help people who still have to walk miles for water. Lent Family Fast Day is Friday 26th February.

Love In Action

The following resources are available to parishes as part of the Love in Action programme: www.stepforwardinlove.org which is a parish programme designed to introduce your congregation, youth, school or faith-sharing group to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). After completing the programme, you will have the tools to reflect on the needs of your community and start your own social outreach projects. The resources provide reflections and readings on key elements of Catholic Social Teaching. To find out more, please email caritas@prcdtr.org.uk or call 01364 645 421.

The following six areas could be points for reflection during Lent 2021:

WEEK ONE: Preferential Option for the Poor

'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.' Luke 6:20-22.

This Lent, perhaps we can take time to reflect on whether we truly listen to those who are living in poverty. What are we called to do to help those within our own community living in poverty or destitution? What are we called to do, particularly during this time of the pandemic?

The Church holds that we should all have a special focus on supporting, walking alongside and sharing with people who are living in poverty. Pope Francis's much quoted phrase about wanting 'a poor church for the poor' holds the Catholic social teaching principle of the preferential option for the poor at its heart. The option for the poor



includes talking with, and listening to, those who are living in poverty. It is not just thinking that we know what people want or need, but listening to people, sharing in their suffering, being the 'voice for the voiceless' when it is not being heard.

- Why not do something to serve the poor and vulnerable in your community?
- You could volunteer, deliver groceries to someone isolating, or donate to a local charity that helps those in need.

WEEK TWO: A Call to Community and Participation

'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Matthew 25:40.

Community is an important concept we need to nurture and we have seen that manifest in the response to the pandemic. We are social beings who flourish from our relationship with others which can be so difficult at the moment. Building community within our parishes and where we live and work is important. During Lent we can reflect on how we might contribute to our community; what gifts or talents could we provide to help others? Could you make time for others this week or is there something you could help improve? Is now the time to try?

WEEK THREE: Dignity and Equality of Each Human Person

'Then God said, Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them'. Genesis 1:26-27.

The principle of human dignity – that we all have a unique worth not because of anything we do, but because we are made by God – is central to Catholic social teaching. This week we might consider how each individual is made in God's image and likeness and the truth that Christ is present in everyone. How can you show how much you love God, through the love you show to others whom you meet? And those you don't see, but who feel the impact of your choices and decisions?

WEEK FOUR: Solidarity Among Peoples and the Promotion of Peace

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.' John 14:27.

Catholic social teaching tells us that peace isn't just the absence of war. Inequality leads to conflict. The way we treat one another can lead to conflict. Yet, if we truly hold to human dignity, if we truly look for Christ in others, we will strive to realise the unity that is in Christ. It is in this building of solidarity that we journey towards peace. We are connected and called to care for one another, promoting unity and peace throughout God's human family.

- Who in our parish or local community do we need to reach out to and build stronger relationships with?
- How can we invite others to join us in our commitment to promote solidarity in our society?



WEEK FIVE: Care of Creation

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.' Genesis 1.

Care for the earth, and social justice are inseparable. Actions that have helped to damage the environment, mostly actions of developed nations, have the most profound impact on the world's poorest people.

Pope Francis says: *'All of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect.'* And so *'every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged'* (Care of our Common Home, 89, 93). How can we as individuals care for creation in our daily life?

WEEK SIX: The Dignity and Rights of Workers

'Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for labourers deserve their food.' Matthew 10: 1-15.

The Church has long been a supporter of the right of people to work. Work is more than simply being able to earn money. It is about being able to support oneself, and one's family. It is about finding a role and place within society, finding fulfilment and a sense of purpose and worth. It is also about people being paid a just wage and having adequate facilities to do the work they are tasked with, which is why the Church has long been a supporter of both the Living Wage and Fair Trade movements.

- Think about what you buy; who has been involved in the production of the things you've bought? How were they treated?
- Think of the services you make use of – how were the people who have served you been treated?
- How can we better support refugees and asylum seekers within our parish and/or local community?

Fasting

Fasting is another Lenten practice that should bring benefits to others. Obviously, it is a practice that can help us develop self-discipline and learn to sacrifice. Certainly, it can aid us in our developing relationship with God. But fasting also should have positive results for persons other than ourselves. On this topic the second century Shepherd of Hermas urged early Christians to determine how much money their fasting would save and then give that money to *'a widow, an orphan, or someone in need.'* In the fourth century, St Augustine told worshipers that their fast should satisfy a poor person's hunger.

Recently, Pope Francis quoted the fourth-century saint, John Chrysostom, in reminding Catholics that our Lenten fast must enrich others *'No matter how much time you spend fasting, no matter how much you sleep on a hard floor and eat ashes and sigh continually, if you do no good for others, you do nothing great.'*



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