

## **Developing Global Citizens through Religious and Moral Education and Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools**

### Spotlight Address 1 – Catholic Social Teaching and Global Citizenship

**SLIDE 1** Good morning everyone. I'm very pleased and honoured to be invited to this conference today to consider the contribution that Catholic Social Teaching can make in assisting the efforts of schools of all denominations towards developing global citizens.

**SLIDE 2** The blog of LTS concerning today's conference indicates that "*Chris Boles will outline Catholic Social Teaching as an excellent vehicle for engaging learners in global citizenship issues*".

And really, that's an ideal tagline for this talk today. Catholic social teaching is, indeed, an excellent vehicle for getting a deeper understanding of global issues, where we come to see that what matters for one matters for all, and that what is lacking for one has its effect on all of us.

I was asked to ensure that my remarks today are not aimed only at people of the Roman Catholic faith, or at teachers who teach only in Roman Catholic schools. That's a very reasonable request, since this conference is open to all, but it's a reasonable request at another level too – an even greater reason than the openness of this conference invitation. It's because Catholic Social Teaching, too, is open to all and addressed to all.

I'll say more about what that teaching contains in just a moment, but let me stay with this notion that Catholic Social Teaching is a teaching addressed to all, for just a moment.

**SLIDE 3** In 1963, at the height of the cold war, in the midst of the Cuban missile crisis, when issues of global violence and poverty were at crisis point, Pope John XXIII wrote a letter entitled 'Peace on Earth'. He addressed his letter to the various high leaders of all the churches in communion with Rome, and to the clergy and faithful of the whole world. But then he added a new addressee: "*and to all people of good will*". For the first time, a pope addressed his teaching to the whole world. It was ground breaking at the time, but has become the norm ever since. What the Church offers is a global message, relevant for all people, Catholic or otherwise. So I sincerely hope that all people of good will here today find something relevant in what I am going to say.

Catholic Social Teaching refers to a whole range of issues and matters, delivered in a whole range of ways, by a whole range of people.

**SLIDE 4** At its most elementary level, we might say it is the product of the school teacher who instructs pupils what it means to live out the Christian message of neighbour love. In repeating this gospel message she or he is engaging in catholic social teaching.

Usually, though, it is teaching that is given in the name of some or other authority in the Catholic Church, and this can be at various levels, each level, if you like, determining an increasing weight in the authority that the teaching holds.

So a local bishop or a collection of local bishops can speak on social issues, issues that call us to global citizenship and partnership, and this carries weight in and of itself.

**SLIDE 5** In the past, Cardinal Winning was, among many other things, a great champion of asylum seekers, and almost his last public words, in a letter to the Herald newspaper, was to insist that we have a duty of welcome and care for asylum seekers here in Scotland.

**SLIDE 6** Archbishop Conti, too, addresses many issues of social teaching and social care, not least, for instance, when he greets the different faith communities in Scotland on the occasions of their festivals and celebrations. Keep an eye open for his letters to Scotland's Sikh's, or Hindu's, or Muslim's or Buddhist's, or Bahai's. In these letters he identifies various social and moral themes that unite all people of faith, and which allow us all to see one another as brothers and sisters, as neighbours.

**SLIDE 7** Cardinal O'Brien is well known for his particular care for people in the developing world, and his annual visits with SCIAF to places such as Haiti, just last month, or Rwanda, or Burma, or Sudan or El Salvador and so on, all permit him to focus on issues of social concern at the heart not only of faith but of basic fundamental human concern. These experiences inform what he says about the consequences of global poverty.

So when these bishops teach in their own name, already they are giving us a social teaching. When bishops speak together that teaching carries more weight, and is a message the whole country ought to pay attention to.

**SLIDE 8** In a few weeks time we will be going to the polls to vote for a new Scottish Parliament and each time we have elections, the bishops write to remind us what people of faith should be concerned about at the ballot. They don't tell us how to vote, but they remind us that we have a grave responsibility to vote, and furthermore, to vote for candidates who will care for life, care for neighbour and care for the earth itself. In other words, they will be reminding us of our duty as global citizens.

One bishop in particular has the major influence on catholic social teaching, and that is of course the bishop of Rome, the Pope. He exercises his teaching role in very many ways, from saying a few words at the weekly audience in Rome, to addressing particular groups of society, such as teachers, or diplomats, and so on, to writing letters on annual days such as the day of prayer for peace, or the day of prayer for migrants, or the anniversaries of this or that.

**SLIDE 9** Much of what Pope Benedict said during his visit to Britain last year had a decidedly social theme to it. Read, for instance, his remarks to the politicians gathered at Westminster Hall in London, or to the faith leaders in Twickenham. It's classic social teaching, dealing with peace, the arms trade, international development, debt relief, fair trade and ecology, to name a few themes he raised.

**SLIDE 10** Very occasionally the Pope writes something which carries his full weight of office, which is meant to stand the test of time and which carries forward in a significant way the message and concern of the whole Church. Such writings are called encyclicals, and over the years a great many of these have been concerned with social themes, which I'll look at in a moment.

The final and most authoritative teaching is when all the bishops speak together with one single voice, and in particular when they speak in what is known as an Ecumenical Council.

These Councils are few and far between, and in fact the last Council, the Second Vatican Council, or Vatican II, began the day I was born, in March 1962, and lasted for three years.

**SLIDE 11** The teaching that emerges from these Councils is the definitive word on many issues, and the most important teaching that came from Vatican II was a document known as “*Gaudium et spes*”, or “*The Church in the Modern World*”. This is a document that is steeped in ideas that are the roots to understanding global citizenship.

The opening words set the tone: “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 too are the joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”

That tells us a little bit, then, about who gives us Catholic Social Teaching, so maybe we should now look more specifically at what that social teaching contains, and why, as the blog says, it is an excellent vehicle for engaging learners in global citizenship issues.

We can usefully break down the themes of Catholic Social Teaching into eight or so headings, depending what we might include under that heading.

### **SLIDE 12 Dignity of the Human Person**

This is the foundational theme on which all others rest. All people are sacred, made in the image and likeness of God. People do not lose dignity because of disability, poverty, age, lack of success, or race. This emphasises people over things, being over having.

### **Community and the Common Good**

The human person is both sacred and social. We realise our dignity and rights in relationship with others, in community. “We are one body; when one suffers, we all suffer.” We are called to respect all of God’s gifts of creation, to be good stewards of the earth and each other.

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

People have a fundamental right to life, food, shelter, health care, education and employment. All people have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities to respect the rights of others in the wider society and to work for the common good.

### **Option for the Poor**

The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. We are called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor.

### **SLIDE 13 Dignity of Work**

People have a right to decent and productive work, fair wages, private property and economic initiative. The economy exists to serve people, not the other way around.

### **Solidarity**

We are one human family. Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic and ideological differences. We are called to work globally for justice.

## **Justice and Peace**

Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent on right order among humans and nations. Violence, nuclear weapons, small arms, wars, all destroy peace and the Church is insistent on the futility of violence as any final solution.

## **Care of God's Creation**

The goods of the earth are gifts from God. We have a responsibility to care for these goods as stewards and trustees, not as mere consumers and users.

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So, it's all very well to say that this or that is what makes up Catholic Social Teaching, but it's another thing to have that teaching made accessible. This question of accessibility is perhaps the biggest single issue that will nurture or squash the potential of Catholic Social Teaching in developing the curriculum on global citizenship. Luckily, there is plenty of help at hand, and many skilled people have worked on these themes and these documents and developed a great range of resources rooted in social teaching.

**SLIDE 14** SCIAF, of course, is the agency in Scotland which has developed most fully the rich resource of social teaching in the context of global citizenship.

They have a speciality in issues of development, those themes of human dignity, the common good, and so on.

**SLIDE 15** Justice and Peace Scotland and Justice and Peace in my own archdiocese in Edinburgh have produced many excellent resources on these such as fair trade, nuclear weapons, and care of creation.

You are all probably much more able than I am to access these resources, but do feel free to get in touch for any assistance I myself might be able to give.

And maybe a final work to underline the way I began this talk, to ensure that my remarks today are not aimed only at people of the Roman Catholic faith, or at teachers who teach only in Roman Catholic schools.

I would go even further, to say that social teaching is not something that is developed only by the Catholic Church. Far from it.

**SLIDE 16** Each year the Church of Scotland holds a General Assembly of delegates of its members, and the main forum for business in the General Assembly is through what's known as 'deliverances', prepared by their various committees and councils. One of the most important in terms of global citizenship would be the Church and Society Council, and a glance at their work and their deliverances over the past few years – on such themes as politics and government, international affairs, social issues, and care for the earth, show us that it's not just Catholic Social Teaching that give a foundation for the curriculum for global citizenship, but the social teaching of all of Christianity.

**SLIDE 17** It couldn't really be any other way. When Jesus responded to the question "who is my neighbour" he told a story that captured in a nutshell what it is to be a global citizen –

help anyone in need, even your enemy, share what you have with them, and commit yourself to seeing it through to the end.

**SLIDE 18** Jesus leads the way, Social Teaching provides practical applications, and all of you, by means of the curriculum for developing global citizens, show children how to put it into practice.

Thank you.

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