

# **On Earth as it is in Heaven: A Catholic Vision of Social Relationships**

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## **Introduction**

The way in which the Society of the Sacred Heart pursues its mission of discovering and making known the love of the Heart of God is through the service of education, and the way in which Catholic schools serve the mission of the Church is also through education, so I feel myself among friends even though I have never been a school teacher. My educational experience has been with adults, especially in the areas of faith formation, Ignatian spirituality, and Catholic Social Teaching.

Today I would like to do three things:

1. Briefly recall how the mission of building up the Kingdom of God calls for transformation of relationships, including our social relationships;
2. Examine three understandings of Catholic Social Teaching and their implications for how we draw on this tradition for mission; and
3. Tentatively propose some ways in which Catholic Social Teaching might inform the ways in which Catholic schools contribute to the Kingdom of God.

So, firstly to the Kingdom of God ...

## **The Reign of God & the Transformation of Social Relationships**

Catholic schools exist to serve the mission of the church through education. What then is the mission of the Church? The *Compendium to the Catechism of the Church* sums it up like this:

“The mission of the Church is to proclaim and establish the Kingdom of God begun by Jesus Christ among all peoples.” (*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n 150)

The missiologist Stephen Bevans likes to say that it is not so much that the Church has a mission, but that the mission of God has a church. The mission or project of God, into which we are all invited, is the Kingdom or Reign of God. It is already present among us but it is not yet complete.

The Kingdom is a matter of God reigning, ruling or governing in every dimension of our lives and our world.

In 1998 I was at a conference hosted by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace at the Vatican and Diarmuid Martin – who was not yet the Archbishop of Dublin but rather the Undersecretary of the Council – responded to some unrest among certain participants concerning the church ‘getting involved in politics’. He said that to pray the Lord’s Prayer is a political act. In a world of hunger, to

pray “give us this day our daily bread” is a political act. He was right. In fact, this line is a concrete example of the implications of the preceding line of the prayer “... your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

A kingdom is a political structure that organises power, decision making and relationships between groups. There can be no missing the fact that God’s mission has a social or inter-group relationship dimension when Jesus chooses to describe it’s object as a kingdom. God’s will must be done in our political, social, and economic institutions, structures and processes, not only in our interpersonal relationships.

This is why Blessed Paul VI stressed that salvation touches the whole of life:

“...evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of [humanity’s] concrete life, both personal and social”. (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n 29)

Saint John Paul II spelt it out clearly in *Redemptoris Missio*:

“The Kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually as people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another...”

The Kingdom is the concern of everyone: individuals, society, and the world. Working for the Kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God’s activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the Kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. In a word, the Kingdom of God is the manifestation and the realization of God’s plan of salvation in all its fullness.” (*Redemptoris Missio*, n 15)

The social dimension of evangelization is a major theme taken up by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Every chapter of EG touches on the social dimension of evangelization and the longest chapter focuses on it specifically. Pope Francis affirms that:

“To evangelise is to make the Kingdom of God present in the world ... if this dimension is not properly brought out, there is a constant risk of distorting the authentic and integral meaning of the mission of evangelization.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n 176)

Pope Francis invites us to be a Church that makes the kingdom of God present in the world through our words, attitudes and actions (EG 258) both personally and collectively, privately and publicly. He says that we cannot be a church that stands on the sidelines of the struggle for justice, but must rather be one that works for the justice of God’s reign in our world (EG 183). Evangelization is incomplete if the Gospel is separated from any dimension of our existence (EG 181). We are called to give the Gospel flesh in our particular context, not to be mere administrators of institutions (EG 24 – 25).

Catholic schools don’t just teach information and skills – they educate the whole person as a person in community, with a role to play in the building up of God’s Reign on earth. Catholic schools try to witness as communities of faith to the ‘alreadyness’ of the Kingdom, making it manifest through their lives.

They can be greatly helped in this by Catholic Social Teaching. Let’s turn now to how we understand and draw on Catholic Social Teaching.

## Catholic Social Teaching – Going Deeper

I'm sure that at least a goodly majority of you here would be able to put your hand up and say that you know what Catholic Social Teaching is. Many of you would be confident to identify three or four principles of Catholic Social Teaching and three or four major documents of the modern period. Catholic Social Teaching is much better known in Australia now than it was in 1984, when my grand passion for it began.

I want to invite you to go deeper, to engage with me in some critical reflection on different understandings of Catholic Social Teaching, ways of drawing on it, and ways of expressing it.

There are a variety of ways of understanding Catholic Social Teaching among scholars today. They reflect different ways of resolving tensions between continuity and change within the teachings, a focus on principles or on context, the importance of teaching at the universal compared with the local levels, as well as use of different theological and ethical methodologies. I'll outline three possibilities: essentialism, in which principles are applied deductively; contextual Catholic Social Teaching, which emphasises starting from specific and concrete social realities; and an evolving tradition in which principle and context, experience and reflection are in dialogue.

Thinking about how you understand Catholic Social Teaching is important because it will shape the ways in which you draw on the tradition, express it and potentially contribute to its development.

### *Essentialism*

An essentialist approach seeks to identify the immutable, essential properties that define what a thing is and to work from them. In social and political theory this is often contrasted with approaches such as constructivism, post modernism, or post structuralism that insist that there are various ways of constructing entities depending on the actions and interactions of social agents.

If we look at what is going on in the ethical methodology of the Pre-Vatican II Catholic Social Teaching documents, we will notice a classicism that tends towards an essentialist understanding of Catholic Social Teaching. Permanent principles are applied deductively to changing realities.

Once upon a time I took up leadership of a Catholic organisation. I inherited an operational plan that consisted of a list of principles of Catholic Social Teaching and a series of strategies by which the organisation intended to apply each principle to the world around it. It was a classic case of an essentialist approach. The first thing I did was to throw that plan out.

Catholic people and organisations don't always think much about how they understand Catholic Social Teaching so the understandings that are implied by their actions aren't always consciously chosen. When the implicit understanding of Catholic Social Teaching is not in harmony with the thinking that actually drives the organisation, Catholic Social Teaching is likely to be sidelined or used as window dressing or a *post factum* justification.

In our globalised world where relativism is dominant, it is a good thing to affirm that some principles are universally and immutably true. The dignity of the human person is not simply a function of time or place or perspective. It is not just 'true for me' because I choose to believe it, and perhaps 'not your truth'.

There are however some pitfalls and limitations to this approach.

1. The emphasis on the use of reason to deduce positions in relation to concrete, specific cases from abstract universal principles leaves little room for faith sources such as Scripture. Where is the room for grace? How do we account for sin and forgiveness? Are we implying that God only works through our brains?
2. If the social dimension of the mission of the church is simply to apply Catholic Social Teaching to life in society, then in effect we have rigidly separate roles for the hierarchy as teachers of social justice and the laity as doers of social justice. It doesn't sit well with our Post Vatican II understanding of the universal call to holiness.
3. This way of understanding of Catholic Social Teaching is in tension with the idea that the essential principles, or our understandings of them, might develop over time in dialogue with experience in specific contexts. Do we believe that God continues to act, leading us to deeper understanding through the people, places and events of the world? Concepts such as subsidiarity didn't exist from all time – they were articulated at particular points in history. Isn't it possible that new principles will be articulated recognising and expressing things that are true through time and space?
4. While the universalism of this approach has something valuable to offer to a globalised world, it tends to neglect the wisdom arising from specific contexts that can inform the whole. It can reduce the local Bishops to translators or salesmen of Papal teaching rather than teachers acting in communion with the Pope.

In my own practice I have often given strong emphasis to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, especially those four principles identified by Vatican documents as permanent and constituting the doctrinal core of Catholic Social Teaching – human dignity, the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity. Often, if I have a limited time, I tend to use the principles as an entry point to introduce and work with some of the most central ideas in the tradition. But I wonder if by using this approach I've given the impression that Catholic Social Teaching is basically a set of principles to be applied to reality.

### *Contextual CST & Existentialism*

In reaction to an essentialist understanding of Catholic Social Teaching, at the opposite end of the spectrum to it, is an existentialist approach that rejects the possibility of continuity or universality – it stresses to a very strong degree the specificity of particular contexts. Curran explains that existentialism

“... regards the present reality in a particular time and space, with no connection to what has gone before or what will come afterward, and as an isolated monad with no connection or relationship to other beings [or to] other present realities... [It] has no place for continuity or any universality.” (Curran, C., *Catholic Social Teaching 1891- present: A Historical, Theological and Ethical Analysis*, p 54 - 55)

Catholic Social Doctrine – the word *doctrine* denoting an emphasis on permanent principles - was dismissed as an ideology by the French theologian Chenu in the 1960's and 70s. He saw the social teachings of Blessed Paul VI as the end of Catholic Social Doctrine because Paul VI employed a more historically conscious ethical methodology and expressed doubt about the possibility of universally

valid pronouncements on all social issues. In *Octogesima Adveniens* Paul VI explicitly affirmed the role of local Christian communities (the whole community, not just the local Bishops) in reading and responding to their own social realities in the light of the Gospel (OA n 4) and he recognised that there may be a legitimate variety of action options in a given context (OA n 50). He said that it was not enough to simply recall general principles (OA, n 42.)

It is true that Paul VI gave much more weight to context compared with universality, to change compared with continuity, than previous Popes in their social teachings. But it is not accurate to say that he rejected universality or continuity. In both *Octogesima Adveniens* (n 42) and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (n 25) he distinguishes between essential content of church teaching that cannot be changed, modified or ignored, and secondary elements that depend on changing circumstances and may themselves change. Historical consciousness acknowledges both continuity *and* change, the universal *and* the particular.

In an existentialist understanding, if there is to be Catholic Social *Teaching* (not Doctrine), then it will only be useful if it is contextual. So, to be concrete, and give an example from our Asia Pacific context, here is what Indian theologian Samuel Rayan had to say:

“God’s justice is concrete and contextual. In Egypt it meant liberation for slaves, in the desert it meant food for the hungry. In Galilee the justice of God’s Kingdom meant freedom and fellowship for outcasts and sinners ... The shape of justice and its demands have to be discerned and defined in each concrete historical situation. Centrally produced social doctrines can only give certain general orientations which have to be put in dialectical interaction with concrete contexts before they can be of meaningful service.” (Rayan, S., “Asia and Justice” in *Liberation in Asia: Theological Perspectives*, ed S Arokiasamy & G Gispert-Sauch, 1987, p 12)

The danger of a strongly contextual approach, taken to the extreme of existentialism, is ethical relativism – all ethics is seen as contextual, nothing is seen as universally true. That, of course, is not a Catholic position.

In my observation it has been very uncommon for Catholic people and organisations in Australia to demonstrate this understanding of Catholic Social Teaching. In Asia, Africa and Latin America it was a more common reaction, or perhaps overreaction particularly in the 1970s and 80s, to the unacknowledged Euro centrism of the universal teachings.

In my view, in Australia there has actually been insufficient attention to the uniqueness of our context and to the teachings of our own Bishops and those of our region. Awareness of the local teachings of the US Bishops for their context is stronger here than awareness of teachings from our own region. Even worse, some people seem to think that the local teaching of the US Bishops for their context are normative for our context – that they are somehow *de facto* universal teachings.

If God is active in all times, places and cultures, we need to pay attention to them all. Each has potential to assist in the development of the universal teachings. For example, the relatively recent emergence in the universal teachings of the theme of care for the integrity of creation and the pursuit of sustainable development came about largely through the influence of the teachings of the bishops of Asia and Africa on Popes Paul VI and John Paul II. Reflecting on their own contexts in the

light of the Gospel and tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, these Bishops were able to contribute in turn to the development of the universal Catholic Social Teaching, which had informed their own reflection. We see a two way dynamic of collegiality.

Since the early 1990s I have sought to promote greater attention to the local social teachings, especially those of our own region. I would love to see an Asia Pacific Catholic Social Teaching Institute established but for the moment I just collect and share local teachings through my social spirituality website.

### *An Evolving Tradition*

Between these two ends of the spectrum – essentialists and existentialists - there are others who acknowledge both the universal and the local, attend to both essential principles and to contextual factors, who see both continuity and change within the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching. This is where I stand. So do much better scholars than me such as – Carrier, Curran, Hollenbach, Massaro.

I believe that Catholic Social Teaching is more than a set of essential principles to be applied in concrete circumstances. It is an ethical framework that develops through a dialogue between the sources of Catholic ethics and the people, places and events of human history. It calls for attentiveness to the movement of the Spirit in the world and responsiveness to the signs of the times.

I believe that Catholic Social Teaching at the international level has historically been grounded primarily in western European experience. To be truly universal and to guide action in our globalised world, it needs more than ever to pay greater attention to the full range of human experiences, including those of groups whose voices have previously been excluded or discounted, such as non-western cultures and women everywhere. By examining the local and the particular, universal principles may be recognised, confirmed and understood more deeply. The essential principles of Catholic Social Teaching may take root in and be expressed through every culture, and each such particular experience can enhance our understanding both of reality, and of God's call through it. I believe that there is an unchanging doctrinal core to the teachings, but there are also other elements of the teachings - criteria for judgment and guidelines for action - that do develop over time and offer important practical assistance in responding to social justice issues and concrete situations.

There is one idea about Catholic Social Teaching that I would like to eradicate: the idea that Catholic Social Teaching started with *Rerum Novarum* and consists of a series of Papal documents. The book of Genesis and the Lord's Prayer are bit older than that, don't you think? There has been Catholic Social Teaching ever since there has been a church. From its beginnings the Church has always taught on issues of justice in society. The encyclical tradition of the modern period is just part of this tradition.

What does all this mean for how we might draw on Catholic Social Teaching?

### *Ways of Drawing on Catholic Social Teaching*

If you understand Catholic Social Teaching as basically being a set of essential principles you would probably draw on them by applying them to the issues and situations that you face – using them as

criterion for discernment, and seeking to operationalise them for specific and concrete contexts. You could draw on principles such as human dignity and the common good to determine and explain your positions on issues or situations. You could draw on principles such as solidarity and subsidiarity to inform your approach to action. You might also draw on key principles to motivate action - plenty of people in our schools who are not Catholics are moved by respect for human dignity to act in certain ways.

Maybe, in practice, deducing positions from abstract principles, and placing principles in dialogue with concrete realities might not sound very different to you but they call for different theological and ethical methods. I'll say a little more about that in making tentative proposals.

Understanding Catholic Social Teaching as an evolving tradition opens up additional ways of drawing on Catholic Social Teaching. This understanding of Catholic Social Teaching encourages us to know and to consider the whole content of the body of Catholic Social Teaching, including the criteria for judgement and guidelines for action contained in relevant local and universal teaching documents, not just key principles. It would suggest that it is important to understand the different levels of authority attached to each of these elements of the teachings. It encourages us to attend to the development of the teachings over time on relevant themes and to pay attention to how local Bishops have interpreted them in dialogue with the local situation. We need to be familiar with whole documents and their place in the whole body of the teachings.

We can draw on the actual content of both the international teaching documents, and of the local social teachings of our Bishops, to inform our positions on issues and situations, and our approach to action. The teaching documents of the Popes and of our local Bishops may also inspire us and help us to articulate the reasons for our actions.

When drawing on Catholic Social Teaching documents, it is important to understand how to read them appropriately. I don't have time to develop this point in detail, so here are just a few examples of what I mean: each document must be understood in its context within the body of the teachings; the relative authority of different elements within a document need to be considered; the audience, purpose and scope of the document needs to be considered.

We can draw on the key principles and documentary heritage of Catholic Social Teaching to articulate our mission and core values as Catholic organisations. For example, we can unpack the meaning of 'Catholic ethos' by examining Catholic Social Teaching as one source - together with Scripture and tradition more broadly - of the values, attitudes and patterns of behaviour that make up the Catholic ethos of our schools. Catholic Social Teaching can provide a language of discourse connecting secular and theological language for those who share our values but not our faith, or who simply have limited theological education.

Taking a more evolving or contextual approach to Catholic Social Teaching, we can start from the concrete reality of the school and the school community. Our method here might be to ask: What are the signs of the times in our school? How do the Scriptures throw light on them? Do any of the specific teachings or general principles of Catholic Social Teaching help us to make sense of our situation and to recognise where God is leading us? Does the history of the lived witness of the Christian community (this is also part of tradition, not just the documents) provide insight? This approach invites us to be a community of faith and reflection that engages in communal

discernment for mission. It invites us into ongoing theological and ethical reflection as part of our way of working. This demands something more than cognitive engagement. It is really about entering a cycle or spiral of praxis.

### **What Might it Look Like?**

In these last minutes I'd like to offer some thoughts on how a sophisticated grasp of Catholic Social Teaching as an evolving tradition that is lived by the local and universal church might be expressed in our schools.

#### *Vision & Mission*

Ideally, our vision and mission statements and /or their supporting documents and processes, would integrate the social dimension of the evangelizing mission of the Church as part of the task of a Catholic school. It is a constitutive dimension of the mission in which the school shares. The students to be educated are not isolated individuals but persons in community. Our schools don't just teach young people information and skills – they form young people to become all that God made them to be, to make their own unique contributions as persons in community to building up the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. Catholic Social Teaching can provide useful language for expressing these links, for example, the Catholic Social Teaching concepts of integral human development and the common good could contribute to framing the mission and objectives of Catholic education and the way in which they are operationalised.

Vision and mission documents should articulate thinking about action, hence informing action, reflection upon which in turn informs thinking and the ongoing development of vision and mission documents and the policies and procedures by which they are put into action. This is an area where working from principles can be useful.

#### *Curriculum*

There is a whole lot of Catholic Social Teaching on all sorts of subjects that are covered by curriculum, not just religious education and the study of religions. It would be wonderful if students left Catholic schools actually knowing something about what Catholic Social Teaching has had to say through time, and how their local church has engaged, on at least some of these subjects.

My first degree was in economics, so I'll pick on economics as one example. Do economics students ever hear of Catholic Social Teaching's critiques of liberal capitalism and of socialism? When they study the microeconomics of markets, will they hear that from the beginnings of the industrial era church people have opposed the idea that labour is a commodity like any other to be exchanged in a market and that Popes have articulated the requirements of a just wage for more than one hundred years? Will they hear how the tradition's understanding of a just wage has evolved through time in response to the emergence of developments such as the modern welfare state with its tax transfer systems? When they consider international development are they made aware of Catholic perspectives on the nature of development and the need for justice and sustainability? Are connections made between what they witness and experience in exposure and immersion programs and what they learn about economic history, international trade and macroeconomics?

A great deal more could be done with exposure and immersion experiences. In my experience preparation and debriefing for these experiences is not often grounded in any depth in the rich and sophisticated Catholic social justice tradition. A pastoral focus on the individual and their feelings may miss opportunities to understand the social and structural dimensions of situations and our personal and communal responsibilities in the face of structures of sin. We need to engage our intellectual tradition as well as the feelings of compassion that arise otherwise we can encourage what Francis described in *Evangelii Gaudium* as “*charity a la carte*” (EG n 180). The point here is not to find fault with something fruitful but to point to scope for greater depth and effectiveness.

Not every area of curriculum is addressed directly by the content of Catholic Social Teaching, however the skills and concepts from some of these disciplines may help us to understand issues addressed by Catholic Social Teaching. For example the concept of percentages is really helpful for grappling with questions of equity, and the study of literature can help us to enter imaginatively into the lives of people unlike ourselves and to grasp to a greater degree the impacts of the injustices suffered by social, economic or ethnic groups other than our own.

There is enormous scope for interdisciplinary work on resources and processes bringing the principles and the specific content of Catholic Social Teaching, as well as the response in practice by Catholic agencies and local churches, into dialogue with the curriculum.

My tentative proposal is to intentionally bring people together in interdisciplinary teams with the task of developing materials and processes. By engaging teachers who know their subject area well (but who don't necessarily have a sophisticated grasp of Catholic Social Teaching) in working collaboratively with specialists in Catholic Social Teaching and staff of relevant church agencies to produce resources and processes in a particular area of curriculum, they will be formed in the tradition, produce resources for the formation of others, and give greater expression to Catholic Social Teaching through the curriculum.

### *Policies & Procedures*

The policies and procedures of any Catholic organisation ought to be guided by and give expression to principles such as respect for human dignity, promoting solidarity and the common good, observing subsidiarity, concern for the integrity of creation, and enacting our preferential option for the poor and marginalised. Often our policies and procedures are consistent with such principles, but we miss the opportunity to explicitly link the reasons for the things we do (and don't do) and the ways in which we do (and don't) proceed with our mission of building up the Kingdom of God, with all that that implies for right relationships between groups in society. We can miss chances to evangelise by explaining how these things are part of supporting a Catholic ethos.

When I worked for another religious institute, one project that I was involved in was assisting one of its social service organisations in a review of their policies and procedures. They had very good policies and procedures but they made no connection with the charism of the order that owned the work or with Catholic Social Teaching. We decided to add preambles to the policies to draw out and make explicit the guiding principles and their sources in the charism and in catholic tradition.

What I would really have preferred to have done with them would have been to work with the managers who implemented particular policies to explore with them the experiences to which the

policies were directed. From the concrete realities faced by the staff and the people who used the services we could then look to the charism and Catholic tradition for light - rather than simply looking to statutory compliance and risk management – asking what are the values, attitudes and patterns of behaviour from the charism and catholic tradition that might guide us, are there specific teachings or examples of witness of life that can help us? We could consider together how we might talk about these things in a concrete way in language that will be understood by staff and users of services who are of various religions or none and who have varying levels of English language literacy. We could then draft together plain English policies with accompanying reflections that spell out how the charism and Catholic tradition ground the policies, and which connect the language of the policies and the language of the sources of the agency’s organisational culture and mission. Ignatius of Loyola used the expression “to enter by the other’s door and lead them out of one’s own” for this – it was apparently a saying of his day in Spain. Today we might call this meeting people where they are at, or, thinking of Bob Dixon’s input, dealing with the data.

This process is longer and slower and requires more staff time than simply hiring a consultant to do a bit of writing – effectively garnishing the existing documents with some Catholic Social Teaching and baptising them. This process would be formative for the managers and provide them with the understanding and the materials to resource the training and formation of their staff. It is a process that draws us into being a community of reflection and action that actually lives out of its evolving traditions of spirituality and Catholic Social Teaching and which contributes to these traditions new expressions of tradition through deep engagement with context. It is an exercise in communal apostolic discernment – seeking God’s call to the group in its concrete experiences for the sake of the Kingdom. In this more detailed process the tradition becomes generative rather than something added as an afterthought for legitimacy.

### *Liturgy & Worship*

I want to mention liturgy and worship briefly in order to acknowledge it as an area of strength for Catholic schools. Catholic schools are very good at celebrating events such as Social Justice Sunday, Migrant and Refugee Sunday, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday that are part of the liturgical calendar, and also at bringing events in the world into prayer and worship.

The one thing I would like to encourage schools to consider doing more of is drawing explicitly on Catholic Social Teaching, and especially the teachings of local Bishops, in prayer and liturgy. It is another way of helping students to link their faith and their desire for social justice, to connect with the fact that the Church has a long tradition of teaching and acting for justice – and even if they don’t hear it on the news, our Bishops are speaking out for asylum seekers, the unemployed, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and so many others suffering injustice in our country.

### *Professional Development*

And finally, I come to professional development. If members of our school communities are asked to do all these things, then they will need knowledge and skills that perhaps aren’t so widespread right now.

There is some good material around, including on the CEO website, particularly REOnline, and on the websites of church agencies. I'll also put in a shameless plug for my own website [www.social-spirituality.net](http://www.social-spirituality.net) However most of this is entry level material and I think we need to go deeper.

I would like to see beginning teachers receive a general introduction to CST sometime in their first two to three years. More experienced teachers might be offered a deep dive into the content and history of Catholic Social Teaching in their subject areas. In service will be needed on a regular basis to keep up with developments in the teachings and in the responses of the church locally and universally.

Business managers, human resource people, people involved in development offices, promotions, advancement and marketing also need to understand how Catholic Social Teaching articulates a key dimension of mission and should guide their work too.

There are some opportunities to study Catholic Social Teaching at academic institutions but the only place in Australia that offers a real specialisation is the Yarra Institute of Theology.

Because I see Catholic Social Teaching as a living tradition of spirituality and ethics that evolves through time in dialogue with experience and reflection, I am convinced that *formation* is needed, not just professional development. The spirituality of the Catholic Social Teaching tradition is more likely to sustain and motivate the people of our schools than general principles and the content of the teaching documents, and importantly to draw them into a living community of reflection and action. Opportunities for prayer and shared praxis will build our capacity to understand and draw creatively on the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching. For this reason I tend to favour experiential and contextual programs in which a specialist might accompany a community in learning and acting around a concrete need.

## **Conclusion**

We want to make the Kingdom of God manifest on earth as it is in heaven. We can do this by joining our will with the will of God - it will call for the transformation of every dimension of our lives and relationships, including our social relationships.

Catholic Social Teaching is an important resource in this effort, communicating the reflection through time of the Christian community as it seeks to read and respond to God's action in the world through the signs of the times and the movement of the Spirit. This lived spiritual and ethical tradition is so much more than a list of principles and documents. We need to get to know it more deeply and draw on it more creatively.

My main proposals are deep formation in the Catholic Social teaching tradition for school staff and interdisciplinary collaboration with specialists in Catholic Social Teaching and professional staff of church social service and development agencies.

What might it look like if we drew on Catholic Social Teaching better to understand the demands of the justice of God's Kingdom in our schools?

The way in which we articulate our vision and mission could be an act of evangelization.

Our curriculum could help students to understand issues of justice in society and could communicate to them the content and approach of Catholic Social Teaching on these issues.

Our policies and procedures could articulate the operational implications of our principles and values.

The ways in which we develop curriculum material and processes as well as policies could be an exercise in living the spiritual and ethical tradition of Catholic Social Teaching.

Our liturgy and worship could unite our daily lives and efforts to bring about the Kingdom on earth with the desire for complete union with God in heaven.

Our professional development and adult faith formation could invite members of our school communities to enter into and grow in the Catholic justice tradition.

Slides for the presentation can be found at <https://www.haikudeck.com/p/Mz8YCNlRqT/on-earth-as-it-is-in-heaven>