

## A Guide to Justice

*Justice is one of the most important aspects of the way people relate to each other in a society. Over the centuries, religious groups, philosophers, politicians and lawyers have attempted to describe different dimensions of justice. The following are some examples of justice in human relationships.*

### **Fairness in Agreements**

Individuals and groups strive to achieve a fair balance in exchanges. An example would be when someone lends another person money at a fair rate of interest. Each person or group agrees to act in the best interests of all concerned in the agreement.

### **Allocation of Resources**

People in a community decide to share their resources according to fair criteria. An example of this is when the government collects taxes from people to

### **Social Justice**

This is the obligation on all people in a community to work actively to reshape organisations and structures of society for the good of all, and not just for the benefit of some. The aim of social justice is for each and every person to achieve full human dignity. Efforts to

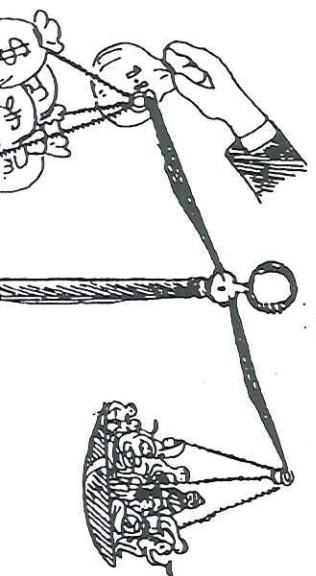
achieve social justice could involve action to change workplace relations, reform prisons, or enhance access to schooling for disadvantaged people. Social justice is one of the major interests of religious groups as well as welfare organisations and trade unions.

provide goods and services. Justice is achieved when the criteria used for deciding how much tax each person pays are fair and take account of individual circumstances.

### **Personal Obligations to Society**

As well as the community having a responsibility to the individual person, each person has a responsibility to the community. An example

could be a person agreeing to pay a fair amount of tax. Here, a person accepts the responsibility of citizenship and contributes their fair share to the community's revenue. Many of the discussions in Australian parliaments focus on the ability to allow maximum freedom to each person while ensuring that obligations and responsibilities to the whole community are met.



## Proverbial Wisdom on Justice

5

Proverbs are one way in which modern communities pass on their accumulated wisdom from one generation to the next. Proverbs are short concise sayings which contain a truth or insight to be applied to a real life situation. Proverbs are used as a part of many people's ordinary speech. They help people decide how to act.

You may recall many proverbs you learned from your parents and grandparents. Some proverbs contain truths which are relevant to issues of justice. Look at the list of proverbs below. Select three that you think best describe an approach to justice. Explain your reasons for your choices:

### Proverb

### Choice

All's fair in love and war.

Do unto others what you would want them to do to you.

An eye for an eye and a tooth for tooth.

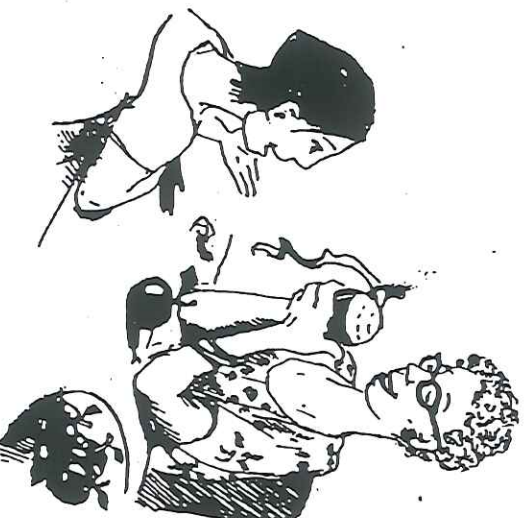
Enough is as good as a feast.

It is more blessed to give than receive.

If you want peace, prepare for war.

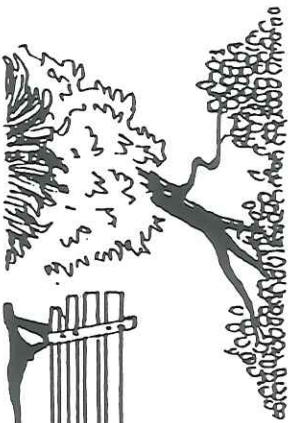
A person cannot serve two masters.

What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

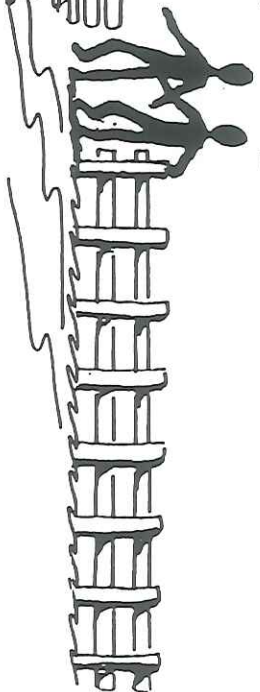


# Talking About Justice

Most people are poor simply because they are lazy and do not want to work. They should be made to go out to work. If they can't find a job, the government should make them work on worthwhile social service projects.



I think you might be mistaken about an important point. Most people who are poor in Australia go out to work. They work at difficult jobs for low wages. The reason they are poor is that they are not paid enough, or their work is seasonal, not year-round. About half the people below the poverty line go out to work. The rest are single mothers, old people, or are chronically ill.



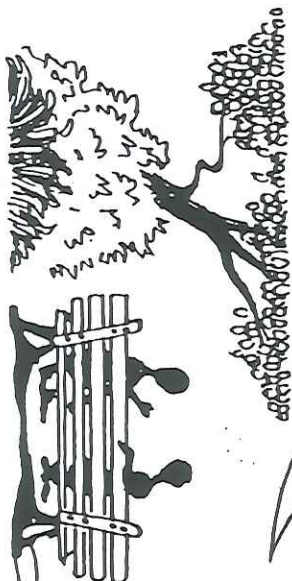
OK, that may be so, but if poor people saved more of their money, instead of wasting it on drinking or blowing it at the TAB or the casino, they wouldn't be so poor. They could spend more of their money on important things.



You probably don't realise that poor people spend most of their income on basics like food, clothing and shelter. About two-third of their income each week goes on these basic necessities. If poor people want to spend their money having fun, why not other Australians do that.



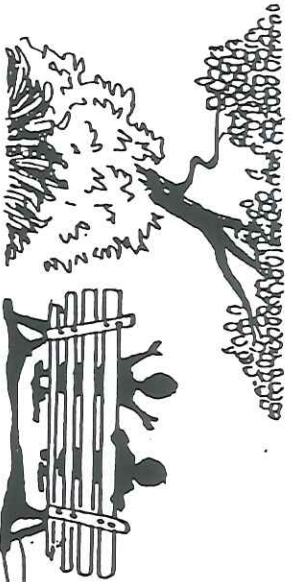
Well, whatever you say, the fact is: I made it on my own. No one gave me any help, and I'm a better person for it. I think that governments should cut back the money they spend on welfare. It just encourages people to be lazy.



I see what you mean, but you must admit we all need help sometimes. Most people don't choose to be poor, unemployed or sick because you made it "on your own" it was probably because someone helped you to attend good school, or you had a family who had money to support you while you studied.



Anyway, why are we talking about poverty in Australia. The real problem is in the developing world. That's where you find poverty, not here.



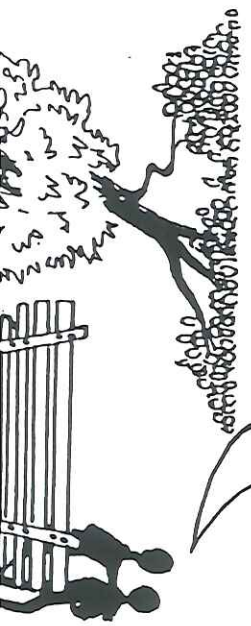
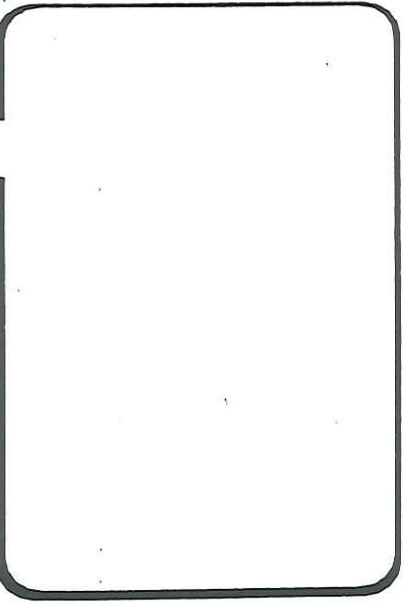
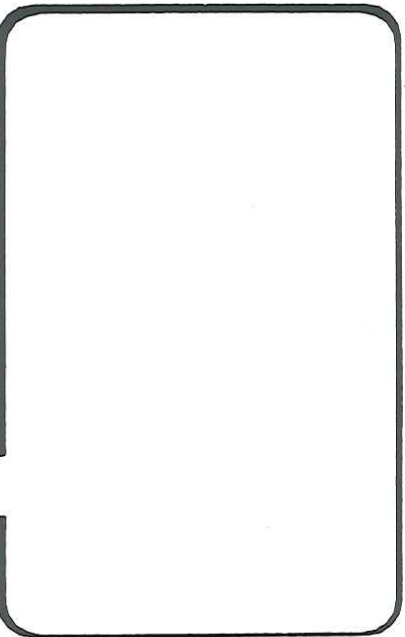
Poverty exists without regard for national borders. The whole point is that resources are distributed unequally between people. There are political structures that allow people to be rich and powerful, while others remain poor and weak. These political structures exist just as readily in this country as they do in developing countries.



Maybe there's nothing I can do about it. I didn't cause all these things to happen. I just want to be left alone.



Perhaps you cannot solve all the problems of injustice, but I think everyone has an obligation to respond in some meaningful way. Even avoiding making things worse is a start.



### Complete the Sentence

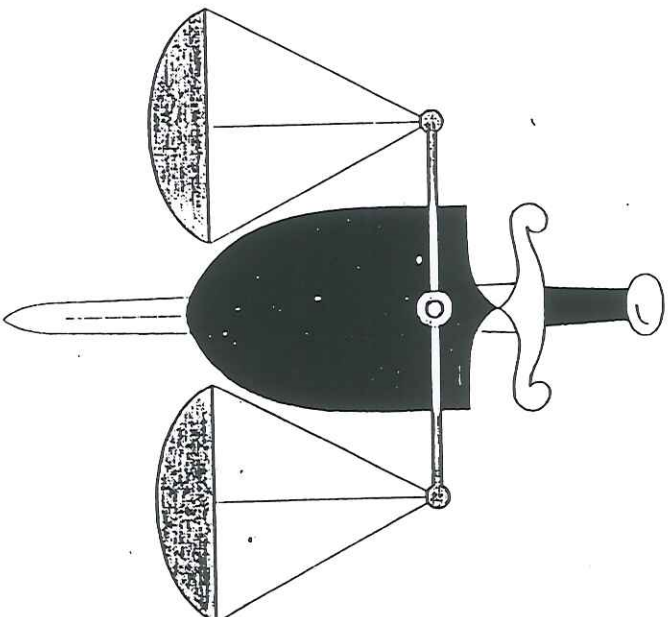
When I think of justice the first thing that comes to mind is ...

Another word for justice is ...

For me, a person who represents justice is ...

If the world was a just place, the most obvious difference would be ...

When I think of other people suffering because of an injustice, I feel ...



# BASIC JUSTICE

The norms of basic justice state the minimum levels of mutual care and respect that all persons and communities owe to each other. Though the rich biblical understanding of a fully just society reaches beyond these levels, the criteria of basic justice establish the minimum standards for all social and economic life.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

*calls for fundamental fairness in all agreements and exchanges between individuals or private social groups.* It demands respect for the equal human dignity of all persons in economic transactions, contracts, or promises. For example, workers owe their employers diligent work in exchange for their wages. Employers are obligated to treat their employees as persons, paying them fair wages in exchange for the work done and by establishing conditions and patterns of work that are truly human.

*requires that the allocation of income, wealth, and power in society be evaluated in light of its effects on persons whose basic material needs are unmet.* The Second Vatican Council stated: "The right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church hold this view, teaching that we are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of our superfluous goods." Minimum material resources are an absolute necessity for human life. If persons are to be recognized as members of the human community, then the community has an obligation to help fulfil these basic needs unless an absolute scarcity of resources

makes this strictly impossible. No such scarcity exists in the United States today. Justice also has implications for the way the larger social, economic, and political institutions of society are organized.

*implies that persons have an obligation to be active and productive participants in the life of society and that society has a duty to enable them to participate in this way.* This form of justice can also be called "contributive," for it stresses the duty of all who are able to help create the goods, services, and other nonmaterial or spiritual values necessary for the welfare of the whole community. In the words of Pius XI, *It is of the very essence of social justice to demand from each individual all that is necessary for the common good.* Productivity is essential if the community is to have the resources to serve the well-being of all. The meaning of social justice also includes a duty to organize economic and social institutions so that people can contribute to society in ways that respect their freedom and the dignity of their labor.

Adapted from -  
Wilkins, R.J. and Grover, V.  
*Achieving Social Justice: A Catholic Perspective.* Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown, 1987.

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# TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF JUSTICE

*Historically, justice has always been a human concern*

It is a concern that is mirrored throughout secular and biblical history. For whether you refer to the slave uprising in ancient Rome or the flight of the slaves which Moses led out of Egypt, the pre-occupation has been for a world in which people are equal and free, a society in which the person is entitled to and receives justice.

This yearning for justice has been manifested throughout history in the movements of persons, communities, societies and civilisations. It is perhaps most evident in those periods of social trauma which precipitate revolution.

These movements have included:

- the struggle for just government through democratisation and self-direction as in the American War of Independence;
- pursuit of human rights in the call for liberty, equality and fraternity embodied in the French Revolution;
- the cry for meaningful work and the right to just social conditions arising from the Industrial Revolution;
- the struggle for political self-determination in the liberation movements of Africa, Asia, the Pacific and South America.

*You might refer to the historical development of justice in the ORIENTATION document.*

Historical movements develop according to the political, economic, cultural and religious factors operating within a given social period. Such historical movements reflect an understanding of justice which extends throughout both personal and social life.

*Justice is integral to the entirety of human existence*

National Missionary Council      *Mission and Justice Perspective: Mission and Justice Support Statement No. 1.* Sydney: 1982 p. 36. Used with permission.

- For the person, justice concerns:
- relationships in which people are equal, honest and open;
  - a lifestyle which relies upon the freedom and not the oppression of others;
  - work which contributes to the betterment and not the detriment of others.

For the society, justice relates to:

- the right of all people to participate in government;
- the rights of free expression, assembly and dissent;
- the economic and political needs of all people;

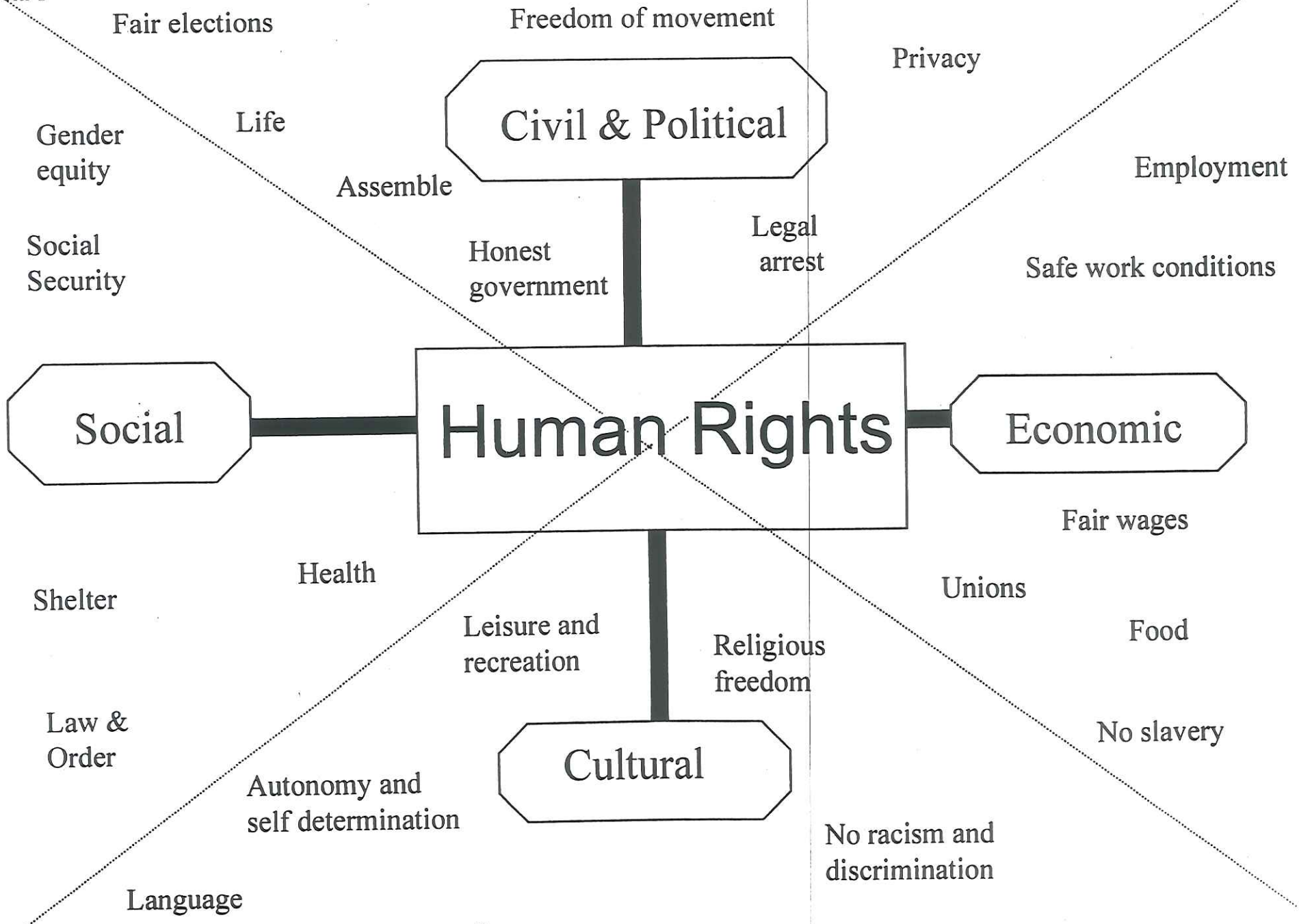
- freedom of conscience;
- the right to one's own culture.

Such an understanding of justice is reflected not only throughout history but also throughout Christianity.

For Christians, involvement in the struggle for justice is based on:

- the command of Jesus to love one another as he loved us;
- a response to the mission of Christ;
- a commitment to the realization of the Kingdom of God.

It is understanding of justice which acknowledges the person as the subject and not the object of history. In doing so it continues to regard all people as architects of the future.



12a



## Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Everyone should strive for the following rights and freedoms:

### CULTURAL

- Men and women of age, who of their own free will, have the right to marry and form a family regardless of their race or religion.
- Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.
- Everyone has the right to an education.
- Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- Everyone has duties to the community to ensure that all people respect the rights and freedom of all.

12c

## **SOCIAL**

- Everyone has the right to own property.
- Everyone has the right to social security.
- Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself /or herself and his/or her family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care.

## **ECONOMIC**

- Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work.
- Everyone has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- Everyone has the right to a just and fair pay allowing his or her family an existence worthy of human dignity.
- Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions.
- No one shall be held in slavery or servitude.

12d

## CIVIL AND POLITICAL

- All people are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
- Everyone has the right to life, freedom and security.
- No one shall be subject to torture or degrading treatment.
- Everyone has the right to a fair trial.
- Everyone has the right to protection of the law without discrimination.
- Everyone has the right to be assumed innocent until proven guilty.
- No one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
- No one shall be subject to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of movement within their own country .
- Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

- Everyone has the right to seek asylum from persecution.
- Everyone has the right to a nationality.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, this includes the right to express these privately and publicly.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- Everyone has the right to join or not to join associations.
- Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his /or her country.
- Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his/or her country.

From Universal Declaration of Human Rights - United Nations Department of Public Information.

## Visions of Justice

### Justice in the Old Testament

The Old Testament tells the stories of the people of ancient Israel and their covenant relationship with God. This covenant relationship required many things from God's chosen people: the rabbis have discovered 613 precepts or teachings which guide faithful Jews in their observance of the covenant. The covenant meant that God's plans were to be carried out by God's chosen people; the laws of the covenant meant that the people, both individually and as a community, were responsible for carrying out the demands of the covenant.

Let justice flow like water, and goodness from an everflowing stream. **Amos 5:24**

Defend the lowly and the fatherless; Render justice to the afflicted and the destitute.

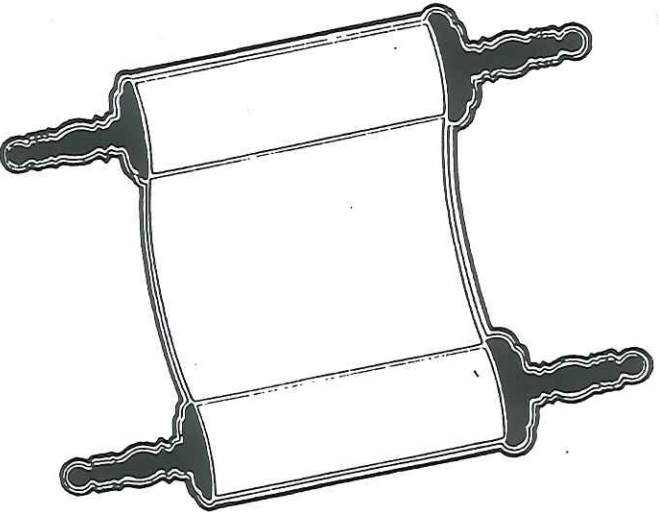
Rescue the lowly and the poor; From the hand of the wicked deliver them. **Psalms 82:3-4**

You have been told what God requires of you: Only to do right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God. **Micah 6:8**

Make justice your aim; redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow. **Isaiah 1:17**

### The Role of the Prophets

Like all human communities, the people of ancient Israel did not always live up to the highest ideals which had been set for them. Corruption, greed and selfishness were as much a reality then as they are in modern communities. In ancient Israel, prophets were significant members of the community who constantly reminded the people and the leaders of their responsibilities to the covenant. They informed the people of Israel what God desires: most is justice. The speeches of the prophets were strong and uncompromising: the people need to look after the poor and disadvantaged. In this way, the people of Israel would show that they were keeping their responsibilities to the covenant.



## Jubilee Justice

In the Old Testament an amazing law is described for the Jews to follow: every fifty years a trumpet would be sounded throughout the land. At the sound of the trumpet, people were to return to their home and family. There was to be no sowing or harvesting-of crops for the whole year. Slaves would be freed. Justice would reign throughout the land.

The jubilee year taught the people that the land and everything in it belonged to God . the people were stewards or caretakers of creation for the sake of the future generations. The jubilee also taught that the people had responsibilities to each other. They were meant to celebrate their existence

as a people and to be mindful of their need to care for each other.

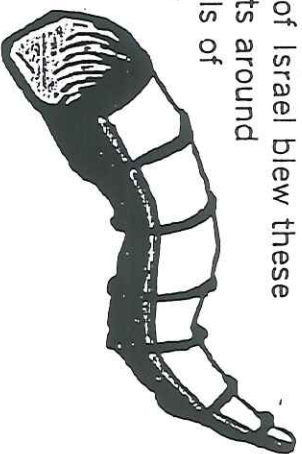
You shall sound the trumpet loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month - on the day of atonement - you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim justice throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and everyone of you to your family, for it is jubilee; it shall be holy to you.

**Leviticus 25:9-12**

## The Yobel

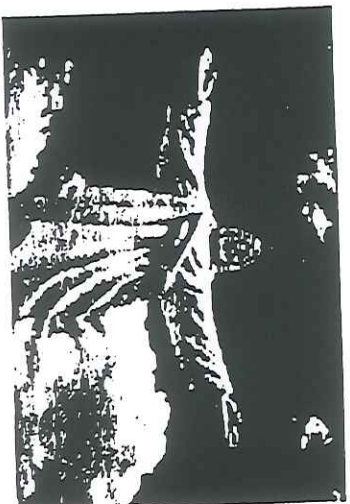
According to the Old Testament text, a jubilee began with a trumpet "sounded throughout all your land" (Leviticus 25:9). The word jubilee comes from the Hebrew word *yobel* which was the name of the trumpet. The yobel was a ram's horn. In the book of Joshua, chapter 6, the

people of Israel blew these trumpets around the walls of the city of Jericho.



## Jesus and Social Justice

The gospel writers portray Jesus as a person who chose to associate with poor people and those who were outcasts



those whom others would not touch. He also invited his followers to do the same: to visit the sick and imprisoned, feed the hungry and provide clothes for those who needed them.

from the mainstream of society. There are a number of scenes in the gospels where Jesus - unusually for a man of his time and status - receives children, women, foreigners and sick people into his presence. The gospel writers want it to be understood that Jesus in his words and actions expressed solidarity with poor and oppressed people.

### Care and Change

The accounts of Jesus in the gospels show him exercising his concern for justice in two ways. The stories in the gospels show him caring for people who are poor, sick, or cast out from the mainstream community. He reaches out to these people, literally touching

But Jesus was not crucified by the authorities because of his care and concern for poor and sick people. He found himself in trouble with the authorities when he questioned why people were treated badly. He challenged the hypocrisy of contemporary religious and political authorities. He took action to draw attention to the corruption he saw in his community. In short, he tried to change the conditions in which people lived.

So, Jesus' interest in justice was twofold: care and change. His concern for justice was a major reason why the religious and political authorities conspired to kill him.

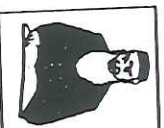
### The Kingdom of God



Jesus taught that God's purpose for all people was a kingdom of justice and peace where everyone would find fulfilment in their lives. Jesus taught that to receive the kingdom, people needed to change their hearts and minds: they would need to live according to the values of the kingdom.

People would experience God's kingdom in their lives as if there was a new heaven and a new earth. There would be a revolution in the way people lived together and treated each other. This new way of living would be characterised by peace and joy, compassion and care, and justice and holiness.

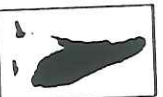
### Concern for Justice



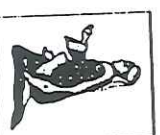
Jesus condemns hypocrisy among religious leaders. Matthew 23:23-4



Jesus welcomes poor and marginalised people in the community. Luke 14:12-14



Jesus associates closely with women. Luke 8:1-3



Jesus cares for the sick and outcast. Mark 1:40-42

## Justice in Luke's Gospel

Towards the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, the story is told of Jesus returning to the town of Nazareth where he was brought up. He goes to the Jewish prayer house, the synagogue

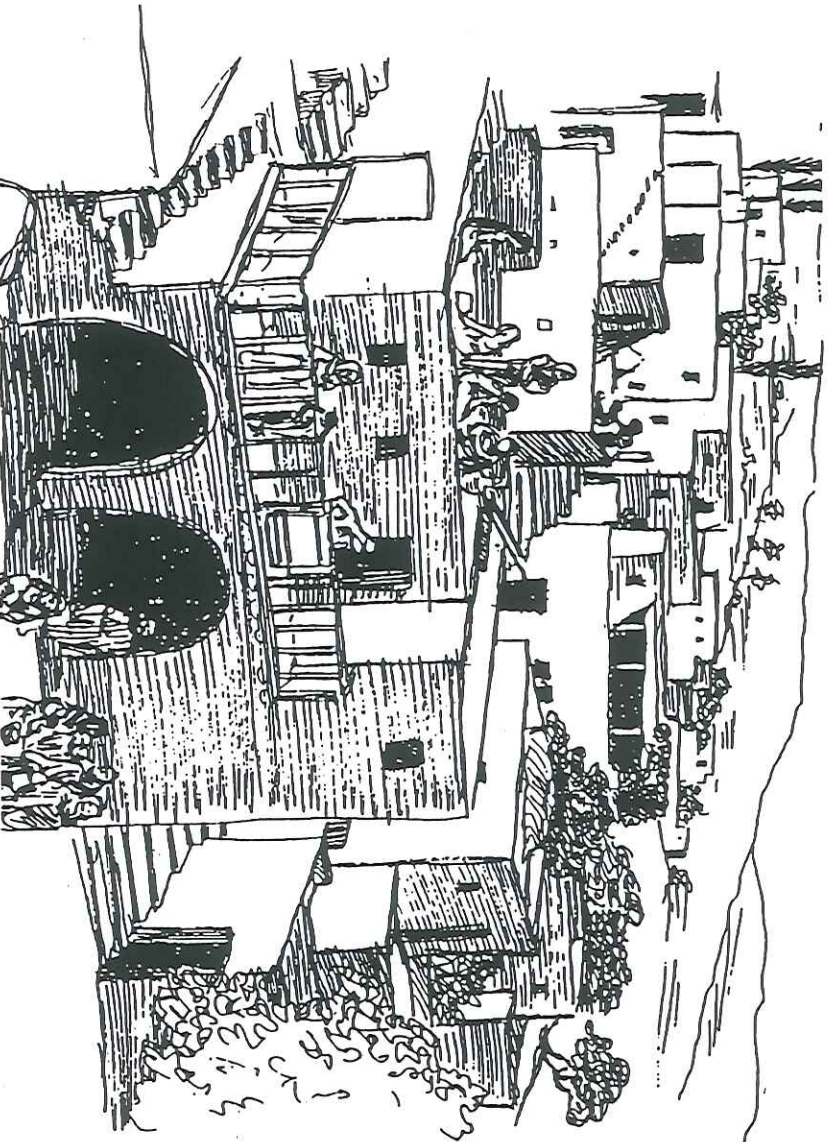
on the Sabbath. The scroll of the book of Isaiah from the Hebrew scriptures is given to him and he reads from it (Isaiah 61:1-2) the following words:

The spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

(Luke 4:18-19)

Jesus sits down and says to those assembled with him: "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing". In Luke's gospel, the message of Jesus is especially

aimed at the poor and outcast. Jesus announces freedom from everything which distracts people from achieving the fullness of life.





What qualities of Justice do the following references refer to?

Psalms 89:14

Isaiah 59:8-9, 14

Genesis 18:19

Isaiah 1:17

Micah 6:8

Matthew 23:1-5

Deuteronomy 16:18-20

Justice

1 Peter 3:12

Isaiah 5:16

Isaiah 9:7

Jeremiah 4:2

Isaiah 61:8

Luke 11:42

16a

## A Century of Catholic Social Teaching

For more than one hundred years, the Catholic Church has been publishing official documents which focus specifically on the theme of social justice. These documents have often been published under the name of a Pope and have emphasised the

Church's attempts to exercise the same care and concern for poor and outcast people that Jesus showed during his time on earth. A summary of some the more significant documents is contained on the following two pages.

### 1891 Leo XIII *The Condition of Labour (Rerum Novarum)*

The rights of workers to dignified work and a just wage, to form trade unions and to possess private property.

### 1931 Pius XI *The Reconstruction of the Social Order (Quadragesimo Anno)*

Fair wages for workers and the right to form trade unions; condemns unequal distribution of wealth.

### 1963 John XXIII *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)*

Analyses human rights, democracy, freedom of the press, speech and religion.

ENCYCLICAL LETTER

## WORLD PEACE

[PACEM IN TERRIS]

OF HIS HOLINESS

JOHN XXIII

BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE

POPE

TO HIS VENERABLE BROTHERS,  
THE PATRIARCHS, PRIMATES, ARCHBISHOPS,  
BISHOPS,  
AND OTHER LOCAL ORDINARIES,  
IN PEACE AND COMMUNION WITH THE  
APOSTOLIC SEE,  
TO THE CLERGY AND FAITHFUL OF THE WHOLE  
WORLD,  
AND TO ALL MEN OF GOOD WILL

**1965 Vatican II Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*)**

Addresses issues of marriage, culture, economics, politics, war and peace.

**1967 Paul VI The Development of Peoples (*Populorum Progressio*)**

Examines the development of peoples - economic, social, cultural and religious. Urges fair trade and international cooperation.

**1971 Synod of Bishops Justice in the World**

Says that work for justice is a constitutive element of the Gospel. Calls for reform of society so that all people are able to participate actively in the life of society.

**1987 John Paul II On Social Concern (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*)**

Discusses the massive gaps between rich and poor nations. Urges redirection of resources from producing weapons to the needs of poor people.

**1991 John Paul II The Centenary Year (*Centesimus Annus*)**

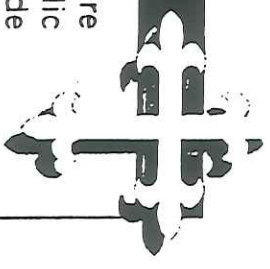
Affirms the themes of a century of social teaching concerning family, the rights of workers, responsibility to poor people, and the need for social justice.

**Church Documents**

The Catholic Church has produced many written documents on a multitude of topics over the centuries. These documents have been written by popes, bishops and other Church leaders. They are written to offer guidance to Catholics on the great

issues of life: war and peace, family life, economics, justice, education, Church life, and the role of women, among many other issues. Most Church documents have a Latin title which comes from the first words of the document in their Latin version.

## A Profile of Catholic Social Teaching



### The life and dignity of the person

The human person is made in the image and likeness of God. Personal dignity means that a person can never be treated as an object to be used as a means to an end. All life is precious.

persons to become more fully human. The Catholic Church supports the trade union movement as well as

workers in their struggle for just wages, more equitable working conditions.

### The rights and responsibilities of the person

Each person has a basic dignity which includes human rights and responsibilities. Some of these rights are the right to life; to a worthy standard of living; to freedom; to work; to raise a family; and to worship according to one's conscience. These rights are equal for men and women.

### The option for the poor and vulnerable

Jesus made poor people the centre of his attention during his time on earth. Christians are called to reach out to those who are poor, marginalised or the victims of injustice. Compassion towards those in need is matched with the need to seek changes to social and economic structures which cause injustice.

### The call to family, community and to participation

The family needs to be supported, it is where people learn values and how to live in society. All people are called to live in community. People have the right to participate actively in the decisions that affect their lives.

### Solidarity

Solidarity is a concerted effort to work for the good of everyone. It is a recognition that we all depend on each other.

### The dignity of work and the rights of workers

The right to work is an expression of human dignity. Work enhances a person's self-esteem and enables

### The universal destination of created goods

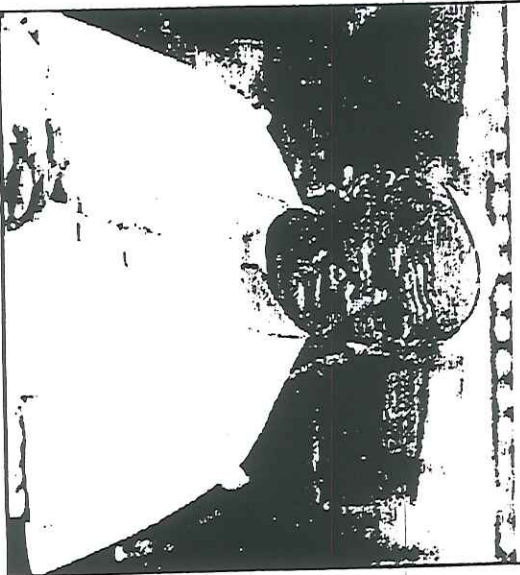
The goods of the earth are meant for all, not only for a privileged few. The right to ownership of private property has social obligations. For instance, the Church favours land rights for indigenous people and care for the natural environment.

## Solidarity

Solidarity is a theme which has emerged in recent Church social teaching and the experience of movements for justice in the wider community. When shipyard workers in Poland in the 1980s began an organisation to overthrow their corrupt political leaders, they called their organisation, solidarity. Their leader, Lech Walesa, later won a Nobel Peace prize for his work.

Solidarity means standing together; it affirms the importance and strength of communities united against injustice. Coaches of sporting teams know the value of solidarity - you will often see them attempt to encourage solidarity among team mates. Trade unions demand solidarity among their members. So do many effective families. Solidarity requires people to stand with each other for the sake of the common good.

Solidarity helps us to see the "other" - whether a person, people, or nation - not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then be discarded when no longer useful, but as our neighbour, a helper, to be a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God. Pope John Paul II (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 39)



Match the aspect of solidarity with the relevant story from the bible.

Neighbour

Acts 2:44-47

Sharer in God's banquet

Luke 10:25-37

Equality among people

Genesis 2:18-23

Helper

Luke 14:7-14



## Your Mission:

“Your mission as young people today is to the whole world. In what sense? You can never forget the interdependence of human beings wherever they are. When Jesus tells us to love our neighbour, he does not set a geographical limit. What is needed today is a solidarity among all the young people of the world - a solidarity especially with the poor and all those in need. You young people must change society by your lives of justice and love. It is not just a question of your own country, but of the whole world. You are partners with each other, partners with the whole Church, partners with Christ”

(Pope John Paul II)

## Injustice: Some Case Studies

### Critical Questions

In this following section, you will encounter a number of case studies of injustice. Many possible issues could be considered, and you may wish to conduct your own research on a particular issue.

In considering these case studies, you could focus on two key questions. The first is: what are the causes of this situation, why did it arise? You could look for background and immediate factors which have influenced the situation. Second, the question could be posed: why is this situation

tolerated, why are things allowed to exist in this way? Here you could consider who stands to gain from this situation remaining as it is. Throughout your study, you could consider the persons involved who are suffering from the unjust situation: how do you imagine this situation affects their dignity as persons? to what extent are they able to act on their own behalf?

In analysing these case studies you may be able to use a situational analysis to help you understand more about the issue.

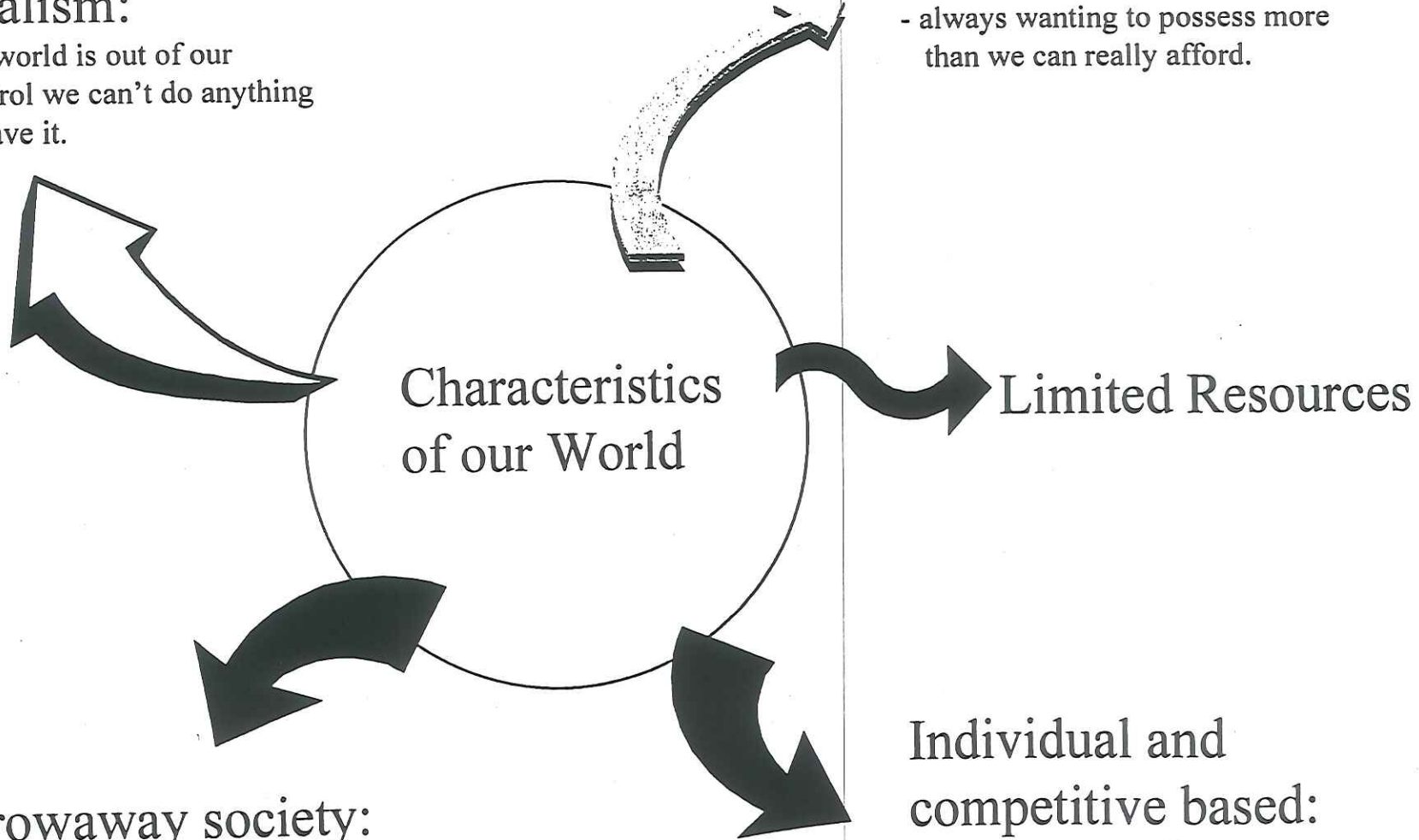
Situational Analysis	
Questions	Responses
<b>Description:</b> What issue or issues are involved in this situation?	
<b>History:</b> What has happened in the lead up to this situation?	
<b>Social Structures:</b> Who makes the decisions? Who benefits from the decisions? Who bears the cost of the decisions?	
<b>Values:</b> What values are evident in this situation?	
<b>Actions:</b> What practical responses seem called for? What steps are necessary?	

### Fatalism:

- the world is out of our control we can't do anything to save it.

### Consumer society:

- always wanting to possess more than we can really afford.



Characteristics of our World

Limited Resources

### Throwaway society:

- everything is built to throw away rather than repair.
- our treatment of others has become like this.

### Individual and competitive based:

- "I" always comes first.

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216

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Snap Shots of Injustice

It would cost \$6 billion per year, on top of what is already spent, to put every child in the world in a school. This is less than one percent of what is spent on the military.

In Afghanistan, one in six people has been disabled by a landmine.

The world loses 7 million hectares of fertile land each year due to soil erosion and degradation. This is a land area the same size as Ireland. Overgrazing by farm animals is the single largest cause.

In Western Australia, Aboriginal people make up 3% of the total population, yet account for 51% of all people sentenced to prison - the majority of these sentences are for less than three months.

Between 1975 and 1979, an estimated 200,000 East Timorese - a third of the population - lost their lives to disease, starvation and murder after the Indonesian invasion of their land.

*we live in a world . . .*

2/c

We live in a world in which the poor nations (known as the South or the Third and Fourth Worlds) contain two-thirds of its people. Soon these nations - such as Brazil, Chile, South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Thailand, Haiti, Nicaragua, Zaire, to mention only a few - will contain three-fourths, and by the turn of the century, four-fifths of the human race. Most of these people live in what Robert McNamara, a past-President of the World Bank and a national security devotee of the 1960's, has classified as absolute and relative conditions of poverty. Michael Harrington, in his book The Vast Majority - A Journey to the World's Poor, simply calls them "the wretched of the earth."

We live in a world in which one-fourth of the people are rich and three-fourths are poor. One-half live in nations with a 1981 per capita income of less than \$300 per year. One-fourth of the earth's people earn less than \$50 a year.

We live in a world in which approximately 40,000 people die of hunger every day, according to Jean Mayer of Tufts, and many, many more live in a state of constant malnutrition. Roughly 800 million people -- one out of 8 or 12% -- live in a state of constant malnutrition. Why? Who decides that food is a commodity that must be bought in the marketplace?

We live in a world in which over 1 billion people are without basic medical care and over 1 billion more have poor or inadequate medical care. The right to health, like the right to food, is sold as a commodity.

We live in a world in which indecent and obscene housing has become the central symbol of poverty as squalid slums and ramshackle shantytowns ring the periphery of every major city in the Southern nations.

We live in a world in which over 40% of the people are illiterate. Of these, two-thirds are women. Of the world's illiterate, 72 million live in the United States.

We live in a world in which over 1.5 billion people do not have access to clean and healthy drinking water.

We live in a world in which more and more resources go into death-giving technology rather than that which is life-giving. Last year alone, the world spent over \$750 billion on weapons -- more than \$2 billion per day! Imagine what could have been done with this! According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, in a 1980 report, the external capital needed for investment in agriculture in developing countries is about \$5 billion a year compared to the current level of \$1.7 billion. Or as The New Internationalist wrote in 1980: "The money required to provide adequate food, water, education, health and housing for everyone in the world has been estimated at \$17 billion per year. It is a huge sum of money...about as much as the world spends on arms every two weeks."

This is the world in which we live. The United States, though but 6% of the world's population, consumes 40% of the world's resources. Yet, even in this wealthy nation, there are 34,000,000 in poverty, more than three-fourths being women and children.

#### CENTRAL AMERICA

- Out of a population of 25 million, 20 million are poor. 8.5 million people live in conditions of extreme poverty.
- For every \$1 that goes to the poor, the rich get \$48.
- 1 out of every 2 Central Americans 15 years and over is illiterate.
- 1 out of 8 children dies before the age of one.
- 3 out of every 10 Central Americans is unemployed.
- 8 out of 10 are malnourished.
- 70-90% of the land is owned by 2% of the people.

21a

## NORTH-SOUTH

### NORTH:

- $\frac{1}{4}$  of the world's people
- $\frac{4}{5}$  of the world's income
- a person can expect to live on average more than seventy years
- most people are educated at least through secondary school
- over 90% of the world's manufacturing industry
- about 96% of world's spending on research and development, nearly all the world's registered patents
- dominates most of the international economic system and institutions of trade, money and finance.

### SOUTH:

- $\frac{3}{4}$  of the world's people
- $\frac{1}{5}$  of the world's income
- a person can expect to live, on average, to about fifty years
- $\frac{1}{2}$  of the people still have little chance of formal education
- $\frac{1}{5}$  or more of the people suffer from hunger and malnutrition

AND NATION SHALL SPEAK  
UNTO NATION  
AND NATION SHALL BE TOLD WHAT'S WHAT



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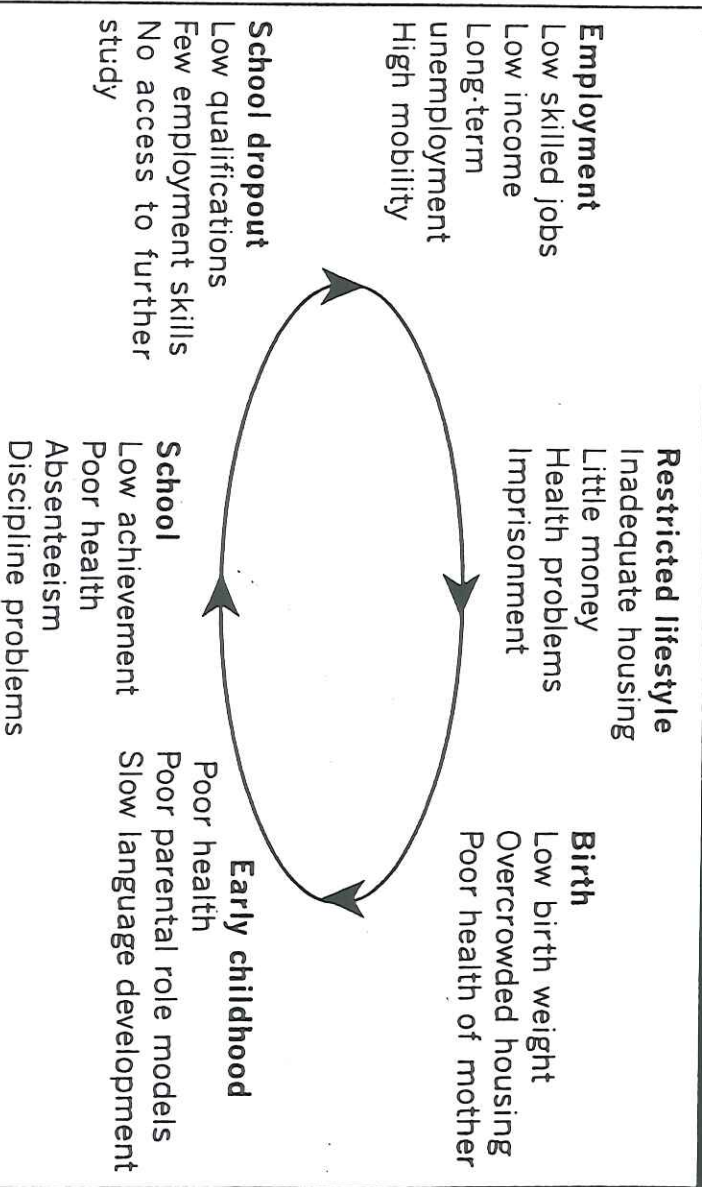
### Poverty Traps

Maria Ellington is 29 years old. She has three children aged five, six and nine. Maria left school when she was 15, not because she wasn't coping; she just could not see why she should stay at school any longer: her two older brothers were allowed to leave school to look for work at that age. Besides, neither of her parents had completed secondary school. She gained a job easily at the local fruit cannery in Shepparton which paid enough for her to buy clothes and make-up, as well as spare a few dollars for her mother who had struggled financially since Maria's father had been laid off from his spray painter's job with chronic emphysema. The cannery job was steady, although June, July and August were quiet months and Maria's union had agreed to workers standing down for no pay during this time in order to maintain their jobs for the rest of the year.

separated earlier this year; Alex's drinking binges finally proved too much for Maria. Maria can get by using hand-me-down school uniforms for the children and a small sole parent supplement from the government to add to Alex's often irregular maintenance payments. Maria has high hopes for Sam the youngest child who loves school and mixes well with other children. The older two children have had trouble settling into their new school which they attended when Maria moved the family to Melbourne looking for more stable employment, and to get away from Alex. The oldest child has developed a persistent cough which might be caused by the change in climate. The children were happier in the country and Maria misses the support of her family since she knows few people in Melbourne; she is content with the knowledge that the move is in the best interests of her children.

Maria married Alex, a fitter and turner at the cannery, when she was 21. They

### The Cycle of Poverty



'I was hungry and you fed me,  
thirsty and you gave me a drink;  
I was a stranger and you received me in your  
homes,  
naked and you clothed me;  
I was sick and you took care of me,  
in prison and you visited me.'  
The righteous will answer him,  
'When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed  
you,  
or thirsty and give you a drink?  
When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome  
you in our homes,  
or naked and clothe you?  
When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and  
visit you?'

The King will reply, 'I tell you, whenever you did  
this for one of the least important of these  
brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me!'

(Matthew 25:31-46)



The problem of homelessness is worse than ever today

For Christians, this is a memorable passage in Matthew's Gospel. It comes at the end of the evangelist's last of five great discourses. It there sums up Matthew's vision of Jesus. It is Jesus who will pass God's own judgement on people. He will judge them on only one issue – their loving compassion for others. This, Matthew believes, is the final meaning of the Jewish Law by which Jesus himself had tried to live.

The text leads immediately into the account of Jesus' passion and death. 'The Son of Man' is handed over to be crucified. In other words, Jesus immediately identifies himself with the poor and outcast, even to the point of being buried in a borrowed grave. Throughout the history of the Church, individuals and groups – usually religious congregations – have thought very seriously about these words. They also form the basis of many official Church pronouncements.

*All Christians are called to act.  
For stating principles is not enough.  
To point out injustice is not enough.  
Prophetic cries are not enough.  
Words lack weight unless we all become  
responsible and act effectively.*

(Octogesima Adventus, Pope P

This Catholic concern is, of course, echoed by other Christians. The charity Christian Aid spearheads work for the Protestant Churches, and Tear Fund the official agency for Evangelical Christians, and the pop star Cliff Richard. These agencies often side by side with the Catholic CAFOD and Trophic charities.

In recent times, the Churches have frequently worked side by side on social issues. The history of the national charity, Shelter, is an example of this. It was formed in 1966 when five charities came together to start a campaign for housing the homeless. They were: the Housing Societies Foundation, Charitable Trust, Christian Action, Housing for the Homeless Central Fund, British Churches for the Homeless and the Catholic Housing Aid Society.

