

## CCSJ calls on citizens to be generous this Christmas

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The Catholic Commission for Social Justice (CCSJ) calls on each person to be generous this Christmas. Leela Ramdeen, Chair of CCSJ says: “The wonderful music of parang and carols lift our spirits at Christmas time and fills us with joy. Let us share with others some of this joy; let us help to lift the spirits of those who bear the brunt of poverty & social exclusion, sickness, and loneliness.

“Generosity, love, charity, compassion, service and solidarity are key Christian virtues that are also central to the beliefs of the various faith communities that exist in TT. If we want to regenerate the moral and spiritual values of our society, we need to develop these character traits in our youth and to practise such virtues ourselves. We have the capacity to do as Martin Luther King Jr. said and lift our ‘bruised and battered brothers and sisters to a higher, more noble place.’

“At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ who came so that we may have life and have it to the full. The foundation of Catholic Social Teaching is the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person. Too many of our people continue to live in an undignified manner – on the margins of society. If we are to build a civilization of Love, we must build an inclusive society. All that we have is ‘gift’ from God. So, having received freely, we should give freely. CCSJ hopes that our generosity during the Christmas season will continue throughout 2014.”

CCSJ recalls the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who said in his encyclical *God is Love* (2005), that for the Catholic Church, charity is not “a kind of welfare activity” that could be left to others. Charity is “a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.”

Pope Francis encourages us to make a commitment to solidarity based on our “faith in God who gave everything for us”. He says “The measure of the greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty!” He encourages everyone to be “good and generous” like the man in Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan and “put into practice the will of God, who wants mercy...” Do not walk on the other side and ignore the plight of those in need. Reach out in love and compassion to them.

As Gandhi said, you and I can be the change we wish to see in the world. In a world in which rampant individualism and selfishness abound, we can make a difference; we can discern how to respond to the multiple cries for justice in TT/the world.

At the heart of the human condition is the human heart. Let us open our hearts to the needs of others this Christmas and give generously from the many gifts that God has given to us. “You will be blessed if you do this” (Jn 13:17).

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