

## CCSJ calls for solidarity with those affected by oil spills

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CCSJ recognizes the human and ecological cost of the recent oil spills in TT. They have impacted adversely on human health, human livelihood and on the environment.

*People-Centred Development* is the first of TT Government's 7 Pillars for Sustainable Development. We call on all those responsible for addressing these oil spills to act in a timely manner to meet the needs of people affected and to demonstrate that we are good stewards of God's creation.

There is evidence from oil spills in other parts of the world that prolonged exposure to crude oil and the chemical dispersants which are used to break up the oil are a public health hazard. The words of Jacqueline Savitz, a marine scientist, are noteworthy. She reminds us that "oil spills are extremely harmful to marine life when they occur and often for years or even decades later."

We are called to "cultivate and care for" God's creation (Gen 2:15); to preserve, develop and restore the environment; to protect and promote authentic human development and environmental ecology which are both inextricably linked. Creation is the work of God and is God's gift to us (Gen. 1:31).

Resolution 6 of the Catholic Church's 3<sup>rd</sup> Pastoral Priority: *Regenerating the Moral and Spiritual Values of our Society* asks "families, schools, and parishes to recognize our responsibility as stewards of Creation and express this in relevant tangible ways."

CCSJ urges the wider community to reach out in solidarity and compassion with those in affected areas and those whose livelihoods rely on the sea and who have been adversely affected.

The Catholic Catechism (2415) tells us that: "The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity....Human beings' dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted

by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of their neighbour, including generations to come...”

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church reminds us that “A correct understanding of the environment prevents the utilitarian reduction of nature to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited. At the same time, it must not absolutize nature and place it above the dignity of the human person... it is the relationship human beings have with God that determines their relationship with each other and with their environment...there is a need to place ever greater emphasis on the intimate connection between environmental ecology and ‘human ecology...Care for the environment represents a challenge for all of humanity. It is a matter of a common and universal duty, that of respecting a common good.” (n463-466).

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