Module 1
A Spirituality of Justice

Spirituality
Learning Outcomes

1. Become familiar with the principles of Catholic social teaching as they relate to justice work

2. Understand Catholic social teaching in a contemporary context

Contextualisation

Catholic Social Teaching is related to social ministry because it offers wisdom and guidance on dealing with the social issues of our day.

It analyzes economic, political and societal influences and offers a synthesis of the issues with an eye towards creating a society that is more fair and equal. It calls us to build a society that most resembles God’s kingdom on earth.

The seven principles of Catholic social teaching are:

- Dignity of the Human Person
- Call to Family, Community and Participation
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Preferential Option for and with People who are Poor
- Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
- Solidarity
- Care for God’s Creation
This call to social justice is clear in contemporary Catholic social teaching through the message of Pope Francis. In his encyclical 'Laudato, Si!', his 'Prayer For The Earth' is an explicit explanation of the social responsibility we hold as members of the Catholic Church.

Click to play youtube.com/watch?v=VJz0ZuxxMIO

Think about the messages from this video in terms of how our actions can make the world a better place.

Click to play youtube.com/watch?v=nwAYpLVyeFU

Group discussion:

- Think about the stories that have helped shape who we are (our life story, our national story, the God story, the universe story)

- What do they tell us about social justice?

Our Story
Parable of the Talents Matthew 25

14 “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants[a] and entrusted to them his property. 15 To one he gave five talents,[b] to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. 17 So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. 18 But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. 19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ 21 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ 22 And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’ 23 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ 24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’ 26 But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Q. In the Parable of the Talents, which character is usually taken to represent God?

Q. How does the traditional characterisation of God in this passage contrast with our contemporary understanding of God?

Q. Which other character might Jesus be presenting as the God figure and what does that tell us about the nature of social justice?
We are not limited to scripture in gaining inspiration for our work in social justice. People throughout our faith tradition identify social justice as central to the mission of the Catholic Church:

“To be just, is not enough to refrain from injustice. One must go further and refuse to play its game, substituting love for self interest as the driving force of society.”
- Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

“Aspire not to have more but to be more”
- Oscar Romero

“A way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth, and not simply to close the gap between the affluent and those who must be satisfied with the crumbs falling from the table, but above all to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness, and respect for every human being.”
- Pope Francis

In addition, the Christian Brothers have responded to this call by defining their modern mission with a justice focus at the 2006 General Chapter in Munnar, India. This led directly to the founding of Edmund Rice International:

“We are called to open our hearts to the cry of the poor and the earth and to be moved to prophetic action through advocacy and works for justice” (Statement from 30th Chapter of the Congregation of the Christian Brothers, Munnar, India, 2006)

Task

- Identify one justice activity your school or community is involved in.
- Explain how this work reflects the seven main principles of Catholic Social Teaching.