

Confronting with Courageous Hearts

A PASTORAL ON SOCIAL MINISTRY IN LOUISIANA

A STATEMENT OF THE LOUISIANA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

MAY 1, 1984

THE MESSAGE OF JESUS CHRIST summons all people to positive actions that enliven and engage their faith. Churches throughout the world speak boldly of Christ's redemptive presence in the lives of the faithful, renewing themselves and confronting with courageous hearts the issues of human rights, social justice and peace.

Sharing in this renewal, we, the Bishops of Louisiana, seek to carry forward the work begun by our valiant predecessors in the cause of human rights, focusing on what remains to be done within our state.

Our vision of pastoral ministry urges us to invite all people to join us in a collaborative effort to respond to the struggles of people to attain that justice which brings dignity and peace.

BIBLICAL AND DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL MINISTRY

Each person is created in God's image: "Male and female, He created them." Human dignity, which is the basis of our equality before God and with each other, provides the foundation of social ministry and authorizes a system of rights and duties among ourselves.

In the Old Testament, God repeatedly commanded His chosen people to love and care for the needy, especially for orphans, widows and strangers. He insisted on just wages and fair treatment of employees. The Old Testament includes detailed laws for periodic reform of the economic system itself, including redistribution of farmland and property. The great prophets, Amos, Jeremiah, Micah and Isaiah, directly confronted the wealthy and powerful of their day who had imposed unjust burdens and systems upon the powerless poor.

Later, Jesus Christ came preaching a Gospel of love as well as liberty and justice for all. From His Baptism until His death, Jesus lived out the prophetic words of Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
For He has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,
To proclaim liberty to captives and the blind new sight,
To set the downtrodden free,
To proclaim the Lord's year of favour. Luke 4:16-19.

Feeding the hungry, caring for the sick and homeless, visiting prisoners, as well as preaching the doctrine of Christ, will provide decisive evidence of true conversion and living faith before Christ at the last judgment, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me...take for your heritage the Kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:31-45.

The early Church continued the social ministry begun by Christ. "None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from them to present it to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need." Acts 4:32-35.

In their pastoral letters during the sixty years after Pentecost, the Apostles John and Paul constantly insisted on the primacy of Christian charity, of perfect love for God and each other – expressed in the concrete realities of daily life.

James clearly identified the “good works” of social ministry as an essential expression of the new Christian faith, a “constitutive dimension” of preaching and living the gospel, of fully being the Church of Christ. James 1:27, 2:1-9, 2:15-16,24,26.

From these Biblical roots – God’s Word to us through the Old Testament, the Gospels, the Apostles and the Early Church – a rich history of social teaching and ministry has evolved. Throughout the centuries, these teachings have affected and often inspired political and economic systems of cultures and nations as they received the Good News of Christ.

During the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution brought new pastoral problems and societal issues. In response, Pope Leo XIII launched the modern social teaching of the Church with his encyclical “On the Condition of Labor” – *Rerum Novarum*, 1891. His main principles, still applicable ninety years later, include: The priority of human dignity and needs in all economic activity; the reciprocal rights of private property, workers, and government; the basic right of workers to organize to defend their own rights; the nobility and necessity of work; the dangers of full-fledged socialism and of exaggerated capitalism. In 1931 Pope Pius XI updated this teaching with his encyclical “The Reconstruction of the Social Order.” *Quadragesimo Anno*.

In the mid-1800’s religious orders and clergy in the United States began dealing with one of the main problems generated by the Industrial Revolution, the immigrant poor, for whom they ministered through various social ministries and the many schools and hospitals they built and operated.

The American clergy was also active in the cause of labor. Cardinal Gibbons specifically defended the rights of one of America’s first unions, the Knights of Labor, in the 1870’s. Within the next forty years, the U.S. Bishops developed a strong consensus of social teaching which led to the “Bishops’ Program of Social Reconstruction” in 1919. This historic document urged government-assisted housing for worker families; a legal minimum wage; a comprehensive government program of “insurance against illness, invalidity, unemployment and old age;” and formation of a National Labor Board with representatives of labor, capital and the public.

World War II and its aftermath extended American power and responsibility worldwide. This, in turn, led to an expansion of Church-sponsored ministry, including Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services, Justice and Peace Centers, lay volunteers for overseas service, Pax Christi – and a greater commitment to worldwide evangelization and ministry, especially by religious orders. Here in Louisiana, our predecessors, Bishops Jeanmard, Desmond, Rummel, Schexnayder and Greco, made their own contributions of leadership to the causes of human rights, social justice and peace.

The awakening of global concerns as well as our own national struggle for racial justice, strongly influenced Vatican Council II’s “Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World” (*Gaudium et Spes*) and “Justice in the World” of the 1971 Synod of Bishops. These, in turn, have animated and expanded social ministry in the United States as have five papal encyclicals written between 1961 and 1981: John XXIII’s “Christianity and Social Progress” (*Mater et Magistra*) and “Peace on Earth” (*Pacem in Terris*); Paul VI’s “The Development of Peoples” (*Populorum Progressio*); and John Paul II’s “The Redeemer of Man” (*Redemptor Hominis*); and “On Human Work” (*Laborem Exercens*).

THE PARISH AND SOCIAL MINISTRY

The local community of our faithful is the church parish from which we are sent forth to share the love and peace of Christ – in our families, neighborhoods and places of business – among all who need to be touched by Christ’s care. The parish pulpit, the altar and the community of believers are the very center and source of our Christian Faith. God’s Word, His Sacrifice, and the entire Body of Christ nourish our lives, empower us, and demand our ministry to others, especially the poor, the weak and the oppressed.

Over six hundred local congregations constitute the six Catholic dioceses in Louisiana. Each of these faith communities must become more aware of Christ’s personal call and follow His example in reaching out to others. On the diocesan level and in the framework of the civil body politic, we, the Church, further Christ’s teachings on human rights and social ministry by insuring the dignity of every person.

Many of our Church parishes have renewed and reformed their inner life, spirit and structure. They

have revitalized the liturgy of the Eucharist; in religious education and preaching they have been inspired by the Spirit. In spirituality and evangelization they have brought all those they encounter to the Body of Christ; through lay participation and special ministries they have helped to heal the wounds of bitterness and sorrow.

Many parishes have listened intently to Vatican II, the teachings of our recent Popes and the National Conference of Bishops, and have advanced to a marked degree their concern for the poor, for human rights and for social justice. Groups like the St. Vincent de Paul Society continue their dedication to the poor which began 200 years ago. Still there is more to be done.

Parish-based social ministry urges local groups to meet needs to the maximum extent possible and to appeal to higher bodies only when they cannot take care of the situation themselves.

Such an approach enables individual Catholics and their families to participate in parish life and neighborhood concerns and helps to build a true community spirit.

We urge each and every parish to examine its conscience, its vision, its priorities and its programs in the field of social ministry. A decade ago the worldwide Synod of Bishops, meeting in Rome, asserted that action on behalf of justice is "a constitutive dimension of preaching of the Gospel (and) of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race."

Ministering to the needy must be at the very heart of the Church's preaching and liturgy, its vision and action, involvement of parishioners, including our youth, in programs that are other-centered and not focused in on self can develop and instill values that will enrich future generations.

RACE RELATIONS

Racial and ethnic factors often form the basis for judging a person's worth or place in the world. Many times the distinguishing characteristics of our people have become unjust stereotypes. Such categorization has been used here in Louisiana, as elsewhere, to separate people rather than to bring them together for the purpose of sharing their unique cultural gifts.

As God's people, we are called to care for and to help one another achieve the fullness of life that the gift of salvation promises. As Christians, we see through external characteristics to the bond of our

common heritage as children of God. He has called us into existence and sees each person as His own.

Out of respect for Christ's body, we in the Church should encourage individual ethnic groups to preserve the rich cultural gifts that they bring to society. Their distinguishing traits are rooted in generations of cultural development; their learned behavior is handed down in language and traditions, historically cultivated by the family and social groups sharing a common background.

Racial characteristics, which we all possess, are inherited with the gift of life. Such features as stature, color of skin, and shape of eyes are hereditary in nature and integral characteristics of the individual bearing them. There is no racial hierarchy among the children of God; ethnic gifts deserve the same reverence and respect that we hold for the gift of life itself.

We reaffirm the American Bishops' statement of shared responsibility for past practices of racism in our institutions and in the behavior of many of our members. The difficulty was not so much the lack of belief in our equality as members of the body of Christ as it was our day to day attitude and practice of inequality.

We acknowledge our obligation to help restore right order to human relations. We show by action what we profess in words. We encourage the cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity of our parishes. We denounce any assertions of racial supremacy or racial inferiority and any groups professing such beliefs.

We confront racists, bigots and those who practice discrimination with love which will cast their sickness from our midst and replace it with complete acceptance based on God-given rights to justice.

The Church and its parishes must guarantee racial and ethnic minority's equal access to all aspects of church life and should openly welcome those who seek a place there. Forced isolation by race or ethnicity is a scandal of our times; we cannot condone the establishment of racially segregated schools and academies which exist because of the flight of those unwilling to learn with persons different from themselves. We call for the true practice of open association that includes and never excludes anyone from our parishes and schools. This is the message of the Kingdom – all are invited.

Our Church makes a conscious effort to reach out and to provide for members of minority groups

who are also poor, for they have the greatest difficulty in obtaining the goods and jobs they need in employment practices and opportunities. The Church and its members are challenged to guarantee non-discriminatory employment practices.

We encourage the economic development of those who have been voiceless in the business community because they lack a significant economic power base. Although given some attention as consumers, they are usually disadvantaged entrepreneurs who struggle in business. Dioceses and parishes, as consumers of goods and services, can assist by giving consideration to the products and services of developing minority-owned firms. Our expenditures in commerce should truly reflect that multiplicity that we see in our Church as a community.

Access to decent living space, a home, whether publicly or privately owned, should not be determined by race or national origin. To foster discrimination, whether in existing housing or by opposing new construction, is to commit a grave injustice. Too many people are overly protective of material goods, have deprived the poor of their right to a decent home. Material things cannot be placed higher than human dignity. We have an obligation, in justice, to insure each person's right to live in peace and security.

Catholic clergy and laity are encouraged to speak out strongly against prejudice and discrimination. Progress in race relations from legislative or judicial actions pales beside the results which can be won by concerted Christian action. Laws alone will not change the hearts of people. We call all men and women to open themselves to the grace of God that He might establish justice for all His children.

LABOR

The Christian Theology of work, derived from the Gospel message on the dignity of all human labor, begins with the premise that people have a duty and a right to full and productive employment. Not only are they to earn a living, to develop as persons, and to serve the needs of their brothers and sisters, but, more profoundly, by means of their labor they help God maintain and develop His handiwork.

Catholic social teaching consistently maintains the view that economic life is meant to serve the common good and to be governed by justice. The Church has noted a number of basic human rights

in the economic area: the right to productive employment, the right to just wages, the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively, and the right of citizens to participate in the formulation of economic policies.

"Today, however, especially with the help of science and technology, he (man) has extended his mastery over nearly the whole of nature and continues to do so . . . Throughout the course of centuries, men have labored to better the circumstances of their lives through a monumental amount of individual and collective effort. To believers, this point is settled: Considered in itself, this human activity accords with God's will. For man, created to God's image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all it contains and to govern the world with justice and holiness." – Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Ch. 111, Nn. 33-34.

While this applies to the world at large, the Church in Louisiana is faced with a multitude of problems inherent in our economic system. Both rural and urban communities have high percentages of unemployment and underemployment. The physically and mentally handicapped need greater skill development and a wider job market, although in recent years great strides have been made in recognizing the rights of the handicapped.

Labor issues in Louisiana are concentrated in two areas: (1) industries developed from our rich natural resources (our forests, oil resources, swamp and farm lands, rivers and other waters) and (2) tourism. Much of the industry we have produces fewer jobs per dollar of capital investment than more labor-intensive industries do. This leaves workers in some regions overly dependent on jobs that are seasonal and low-paying, e.g., farm and cane field workers, fishermen and domestic workers serving tourism. All efforts to diversify Louisiana's industrial base and to incorporate new occupations and opportunities, while protecting existing jobs and the environment, are steps in the right direction.

The organization of the working poor is another important need in our state. There are growing numbers of people desperate for work – transients, migrants, and local residents all seeking employment in areas as diverse as agriculture, lumber, and the petrol-chemical and marine industries. These job seekers are unorganized and powerless.

As a Church, we are called to assist powerless people. Our greatest assistance is provided by

empowering people with the skills needed to attain their goals and by instilling in them a sense of self-respect. Our goal is to secure every worker's right to a decent living wage.

Anyone who speaks to people about justice must also be just. Our Church must accept this challenge and examine its actions and employment practices consistent with sound management. Employees should be given living wages and related benefits.

To address these labor concerns on all levels, the Church is urged to speak for and encourage full employment, just wages, a spirit of cooperation and conciliation between labor and management, and the rights of workers to organize for economic justice while recognizing their responsibility to the common good which may limit or prohibit certain methods of protest or bargaining. This message of early Church documents is repeated up to the present "On Human Labor" by Pope John Paul II. We, the Church, are called to concretize our beliefs through our action.

HOUSING

The Church recognizes that physical surroundings have a significant impact on the growth and development of individuals. Development of the person requires certain minimum standards of support, among which is adequate space for life and growth.

A family cannot begin to cope with the many tensions of modern living if the fundamental security of adequate shelter is not available. While it is true that a family can, with care and love, create a home under adverse circumstances, it needs the security of a particular place in which to nurture the members of that family. For the sake of that decent home, the Church ought to support and endorse public and private efforts to provide housing for all people.

Special efforts should be directed to the needs of low-income families and minorities who, constrained by economic circumstances, will never achieve home ownership but who still need a decent place to live. The Church should continue to explore ways of participating in programs to provide low-cost rental housing or consider the expansion of programs of sponsorship of government-subsidized housing facilities.

The rental of sub-standard housing units for the sole purpose of profit with total disregard for the well-being of the occupants is a serious injustice.

We should oppose such injustices that take advantage of people who have no other option. Large numbers of sub-standard housing units could be rendered serviceable through incentives to both owners and tenants to care for the property entrusted to them.

The elderly experience difficulty in attaining and maintaining adequate housing. They suffer because of economic limitations and infirmities of their age. Some elderly who do own their own homes need assistance from their children, relatives, neighbors and friends to remain there. Other elderly could have a decent home if children/relatives would offer to share the space available in their own homes; the Church should encourage this practice whenever possible. For those who must live on fixed income and who must rent living quarters, decent housing within their means should be made available.

Efforts to influence public policy on housing should not neglect other groups such as the handicapped, whose particular needs are often overlooked. Public and private facilities, whenever possible and feasible, should be constructed or adjusted to insure access and use by handicapped persons.

The mobility of contemporary society creates a large group of people who, for various reasons, require temporary shelters. In many ways the poorest of the poor, the homeless and the transients challenge our commitment to provide for those who are suffering in our midst. Without judging the reasons for their homelessness, we should be willing to meet their need; such care, freely given, is essential to the corporal works of mercy.

Another dimension of the shelter ministry comes from our increasing awareness of domestic violence and the need of lodging for refugees from domestic violence. These abused, sometimes battered spouses and children, require special care, with counseling and advice given during the crisis period. Private homes are not out of the question as appropriate shelters for abused persons, but the complexity of their problems generally requires professional help. Where it is not possible for parish church groups to meet these needs, there should be deliberate organizational activities to support and encourage publicly-funded health and welfare agencies to provide these necessary services.

The housing needs of low-income and middle-income families call on us to influence public policy

decisions that make decent housing available for all who need it. The exorbitant interest rates that put home ownership out of reach for so many are a cause of concern. At the very least, shelter is required for life, and decent housing is a minimum requirement for security, rest, relaxation and human dignity. Life in sub-standard, crowded conditions destroys a sense of privacy and violates the dignity of personhood – it is less than fully human.

REFUGEES

God told His people, “When an alien settles with you in your land you shall not oppress him. He shall be treated as a native born among you and you shall love him as a man like yourself. For you yourselves were once strangers in the land of Egypt and I am Yahweh your God.” Lv 19:34. In the New Testament, Christ reemphasized this message when He said: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” Mt 25:35.

Louisiana has a unique history of immigration and cultural diversity. Its citizens have lived under the flags of seven different countries and have accepted the homeless from many countries all over the world. The Catholic Church in Louisiana has long been recognized for its reaching out to immigrants arriving after both World Wars and again in the 1960's.

Since 1965, Haitians and other Caribbean and Latin American people have come to Louisiana seeking a better life. Though not granted refugee status, they have nevertheless been served by the Catholic Church in Louisiana through such efforts as Latin American Apostolates, Catholic Charities, parish and diocesan committees, and volunteers. In 1975 the Indochinese air lifts began bringing people to this country and these refugees continue to arrive, making their way through other countries to the United States and into Louisiana. Since 1981, Polish refugees have been resettled in Louisiana and in 1983 the United States began accepting Amer-Asian children (children whose fathers were American servicemen in Korea and Vietnam).

Louisiana now has the tenth largest refugee population in the United States. Between 1975 and 1983, Louisiana has re-settled over 15,000 Indochinese refugees. The citizens of Louisiana and the members of our families are opening their homes and hearts to the needs of this population. As a Church and as individuals, we need to recommit ourselves to sharing our blessings by sponsoring

immigrants and refugee families, remembering that except for those of us who are of Native-American origin, we are all descendants of Immigrants.

EDUCATION

The mission of Catholic education embraces four dimensions: Proclaiming the message revealed by God, developing faith-centered communities, worship, and serving the needs of all people. The model of this ministry is Jesus Christ Himself, who is prophet (proclaimer of God's message), priest (community builder), and king (servant of the people). Although the Church's educational mission takes form in many different institutions, programs and activities, all have the same challenge to continue Christ's mission in our time.

We reemphasize the role of Christian parents as the primary educators of their children. Since it is in the local Church that most Catholic education takes place, a vital function of the parish is to train, support and encourage parents in their challenge of living the Good News.

Adult religious formation is important to develop good parents and teachers, but more important is its role in helping persons mature in their faith as members of the Church and society. The National General Catechetical Directory (N.C.C.B., November 1977) views adult catechesis as the summit of the entire catechetical enterprise. Catholic religious education with a life-long focus is essential.

We support the continuing growth of this important ministry in the churches of Louisiana. Programs that foster evangelization, catechesis, conversion, reconciliation, and training for ministry are necessary for all parishes. Programs that provide “cradle to grave” formation and lead people to discover their potential as children of God are especially praiseworthy. Because of the high illiteracy and school dropout rates in Louisiana, we also encourage basic education programs for adults.

Catechetical programs challenge us to understand and care about city, state, national and global issues. Consequently, people need to develop their abilities to analyze social structures, and to take proper action to denounce and to change unjust structures with courage, reverence and love. Education is one method of creating change and of promoting justice both in content and as an experiential process. The Church in Louisiana has a unique opportunity and obligation to provide multi-racial, multi-ethnic education. The extent to which

the Church equips its people to live and work within a society of diverse religions, races, ages, cultures and lifestyles indicates its faithfulness to Christ's mission.

Education of youth is indispensable for preparing people to participate in the complex and demanding issues of social, political and economic life. It is the serious responsibility of all citizens to support quality education (Catholic and public) in our state and to take leadership roles in the local schools. We are concerned that, compared to the rest of the country, Louisiana continues to rank very low in literacy.

We reaffirm our recent LCC statement on human sexuality. (Confirmed by "Educational Guidance in Human Love," Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, December 1983). We regret that some school programs teaching human sexuality lack a sense of moral values. Catholics working with others of good faith have a responsibility to address these problems.

We urge parents to carry out their obligation to teach children religious and moral values and to foster a personal faith-filled relationship with God. Family worship, prayer, example and discussion accomplish most of this task, but the child's formal religious education in a Catholic school or parish religious education program is also necessary. Of particular concern is the formation of catechists who will serve the needs of our young. We applaud religion programs that use creative and innovative ways to develop whole Christian persons.

We are proud of the Catholic Church's historic and present contribution to education in Louisiana through our Catholic schools. Beginning with the first schools established by the Capuchins in 1725 and the Ursulines in 1727, and continuing to the present day, parents have had the opportunity to send their children to a school which teaches faith and moral values within a Christian community. We remain steadfast in our commitment to, and support of, quality Catholic school education, and we encourage creative ways that this choice can be made a reality for more people in our communities.

ENVIRONMENT

Although all of the topics addressed in this statement are concerned with the quality of our lives as Christians and citizens of the state, there is an urgency in our times to address those practices which not only harm and threaten our own lives but

the lives of those yet unborn. The quality of life in the future depends on our use of the earth's natural resources such as air, water, land and minerals today. The Catholic Church calls us to be just stewards, using these resources with minimum damage to the environment and with consciousness of our obligation to future generations.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The subject of Criminal Justice is one in which the Church has every right to express her interest and concern. We call upon all our fellow Catholics and all people of good will to inform themselves as to how our judicial system works and to support efforts to improve it, recalling that Christ identifies himself with all persons.

In Louisiana much has been done to better our criminal justice system. We urge continuous efforts in this regard. Already our State has chosen alternatives to imprisonment which appear successful, such as halfway houses, group homes, drug and alcohol abuse centers and community service sentencing. We support these alternatives and suggest that others be sought.

All of us can further show our Christian concern by visiting and communicating with prisoners and their families and assuring that prisoners and their families receive the spiritual ministry of the Church, as well as those public servants who serve the criminal justice system.

Nor can we neglect as Church to minister to the victims of crime and their families. We believe that ways must be found for making restitution to these victims and to help them and their families put their lives back in order.

The old adage that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" can have its application here. We can all help by doing our part to remove the causes of crime, such as poverty, greed, lust, and hatred. Further prevention can be offered through Neighborhood Crime Watch programs and Citizen Crime Prevention Committees. We support especially prevention programs for young people and urge that reforms be considered in the juvenile justice system.

In short, if improvements and progress are to be made and continue in this area of criminal justice, each individual should understand that his or her involvement is essential. The love of Christ must reach out through each of us to all persons to make known the love of God who is Father of all!

SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS

PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

Include the Church's social teaching as substantive content in religious education, school curricula, programs for adults and youth enrichment.

Reach out in love, service, and hospitality to all those in the Body of Christ, especially the poor.

Develop to the fullest extent possible, parish programs that reach out to all families and to each member of the family. Such programs should be especially designed to counter the consumerism rampant in our society which has been particularly harmful to the poor.

Where appropriate or as needed, create a committee of the parish council for community concerns and social ministry; develop ministry teams, outreach programs and various other parish organizations to visit the sick, elderly, and imprisoned; comfort the bereaved; counsel the troubled; and welcome the alien in the very spirit of Christ.

RACE RELATIONS

Promote Church-sponsored lectures, seminars, unity services and discussion groups designed to improve race relations on parish and diocesan levels.

Use, as a basis for discussion and possible action, the U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Racism, "Brothers and Sisters to us." Leaders and teachers in the community should preach and teach the morality of equality and denounce the evils of racism and discrimination.

Enforce racially non-discriminatory admission policies and practices for all Catholic institutions.

Deny school transfers based on any form of racial discrimination.

Examine diocesan and parish procedures for purchasing goods and services and avoid discriminatory and racist economic practices by sharing patronage with the many groups that comprise the local community.

Give equal opportunity for employment of all persons, regardless of race, in all Catholic institutions, e.g., Diocesan offices, Catholic schools and parishes.

Designate an official to represent racial and ethnic minorities in the Diocese, to insure that all have a voice in Church affairs.

Protest any form of racial discrimination in housing, whether public or private. The parish should not align itself with neighborhood and

community groups established to prevent integrated communities

Refuse affiliation with organizations or groups that profess or practice racial superiority.

LABOR

Support hiring practices which do not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, sex, age or condition of handicap.

Consider the sponsorship of hospitality, social service and educational programs for transients, migrants and seasonally employed people through both the diocese and parish.

Ideally, the Church feels obligated to pay just and living wages, salaries and benefits, to the extent consistent with its resources, to all Diocesan, Catholic school, institution and parish employees, without regard to sex or race.

Examine, as individuals, parishes and dioceses, labor practices and legislation and where appropriate make known the views of the Church in relation thereto.

HOUSING

Explore ways of expanding our participation in low-cost housing programs. Local church groups should consider sponsoring government-subsidized housing facilities and encourage private business sectors to become involved in such efforts.

Explore avenues to assist the elderly who may need help in maintaining their own housing and their independence.

Evaluate parish facilities, and where feasible make adjustments so that the handicapped will feel welcome in the parish.

Encourage families to open their homes to refugees during the difficult time of re-settlement.

Wherever possible provide hostel services for those transients and the abused needing temporary housing. Where the Church cannot meet these needs, parishioners should be encouraged to urge that these services be made available by publicly funded agencies.

Support by various means government policies that promote public good and that seek decent housing for low and middle-income families such as a state-supported system of funding through the issuance of bonds.

Educate parishioners concerning needs to which the neighborhood itself might be an answer, e.g., construction of housing for the elderly, abused, etc.

REFUGEES

Provide leadership and on-going support for programs demonstrating hospitality, respect, care, and concern for immigrants and refugees.

Encourage parishes to develop sponsorship for refugees and immigrants.

Work to overcome discriminatory practices toward refugees and immigrants by individuals and institutions at the community, state, and national levels.

Build programs at the parish and inter-parish level designed to bridge the differences between parishioners of different races, cultures, and nationalities.

Sponsor justice education workshops at the parish and diocesan levels to promote awareness of world-wide justice issues as well as of the policies and practices of both the Church and the United States on such issues.

EDUCATION

Emphasize adult education programs which foster evangelization, conversion, reconciliation and training for ministry in all parish churches. Education for justice and peace should be a central topic in such courses.

Budget adequately for parish and Catholic school religion programs to carry out their important ministries.

Help local public school systems by taking leadership and supportive roles, by striving generally to improve the quality of education and specifically to raise the literacy rate in Louisiana.

Encourage Catholic schools to establish scholarship funds to allow students from poor and disadvantaged families to attend Catholic schools.

Support federal and state government programs such as tuition tax credits and other means of assistance for parents who choose to send their children to Catholic schools.

Encourage and support adequate educational opportunities in Louisiana jails and prisons.

ENVIRONMENT

Plan actively for the conservation of energy in the design, construction and use of church-owned buildings.

Become involved in the shaping of a public energy policy.

Use non-polluting waste management systems for homes, rectories and other buildings.

Issue direct appeals for both industry and individuals to practice stewardship.

Cooperate with efforts of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference to promote good stewardship of our land and resources.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Study and act upon the suggestions in the NCCB 1977 publication Community Response to Crime at the parish level.

Foster Christian values through responsive liturgy, education and the public media in order to prevent as well as respond to crime. The Church ought to reflect a respect for the law and the rights of all persons, and it must also express a willingness to assist in the offender's rehabilitation.

Establish education programs at all levels and solicit the voluntary aid of various professions to offer their expertise to the needy and disadvantage to seek solutions other than resorting to crime.

Encourage citizens, to the extent of their ability, to aid those suffering from aggression through participation in programs such as Crime-Stoppers.

Encourage a cooperative program between the state and the Louisiana Interchurch Conference for the recruitment, training and certification of prison chaplains.

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