

CARITAS LEEDS

Terms of Reference

Introduction

During his public life Jesus proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom of God, gave visible signs of his love which became the Church's sacraments and healed people of their sicknesses. He called his followers to love God and to love their neighbour. Through parables, Jesus taught his disciples what that 'love of neighbour' means. The word 'Caritas' (charity) encapsulates Christian love for all mankind; a love which is expressed through the practical service of those in need.

Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his first Encyclical Letter, *'Deus Caritas Est'*:

"The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God, celebrating the sacraments and exercising the ministry of charity. These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being" (§25).

So 'Caritas', the loving service of those in need, is an indispensable part of what it means to follow Christ and to be a Catholic. Caritas organisations exist to help us put this into action. Living out our faith in Christ by serving and supporting those in need is also a fundamental principle of the extra-ordinary Year of Mercy which Pope Francis initiated in December 2015.

In his Apostolic Letter issued 'Motu Proprio' *Intima Ecclesiae natura*, 'On the Service of Charity', (11th November 2012), Pope Benedict XVI also stated that:

"Wherever necessary, due to the number and variety of initiatives, the diocesan Bishop is to establish in the Church entrusted to his care, an Office to direct and coordinate the service of charity in his name." (Art. 8)

Pope Benedict reminded all those involved in Catholic social action that when we encounter those in need we encounter Christ and that when we serve the poor and vulnerable we are serving Christ. As he states in the introduction to the Apostolic Letter:

"It is important, however, to keep in mind that 'practical activity will always be insufficient, unless it visibly expresses a love for man, a love nourished by an encounter with Christ'. In carrying out their various activities, therefore, the various Catholic organisations should not limit themselves merely to collecting and distributing funds, but should show special concern for individuals in need and exercise a valuable educational function within the Christian community, helping people to appreciate the importance of sharing, respect and love in the spirit of the Gospel of Christ".

For Christians therefore, social action is an important way of proclaiming the Gospel. When this social action is carried out by us as through a 'Caritas' organisation, we do so as part of the Church and demonstrate to the world the love of Christ for all humanity, particularly for those excluded or neglected by society.

Building on his predecessor's teaching, Pope Francis has injected a sense of global urgency, calling us to be a Church 'of and with the poor'. He has likened today's Church to a 'field hospital':

"I see clearly that what the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the Church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugar. You have to heal the wounds; then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds....Heal the wounds. And you have to start from the ground up".

Interview with Fr Antonio Spadaro SJ (30th September 2013)

Vision

The Vision for 'Caritas Leeds' is to create a forum where all charities, agencies, projects, services, groups (*defined as having at least a simple structure and organisation*) that are involved in social action or social care in the Diocese of Leeds, whose work is inspired by the Gospel and operate in accordance with Catholic doctrine and social teaching, can meet together on a regular basis in order to:

- Assist the Bishop in exercising "his proper pastoral solicitude for the service of charity in the particular Church entrusted to him as its Pastor, guide and the one primarily responsible for that service" (*Intima Ecclesiae natura*, Art. 4 §1);
- Assist the Bishop in encouraging and supporting "the initiatives and works of service to neighbour", and encouraging "in the faithful the spirit of practical charity as an expression of the Christian life and sharing in the mission of the Church" (*Intima Ecclesiae natura*, Art. 4 §2);
- Provide a strong and coherent voice, at the service of the Bishop, on important social issues and policies for the Diocese of Leeds.
- Share and celebrate ideas and projects.
- Encourage the development of, and to support, good care practice.
- Arrange joint training where this is appropriate/requested.
- Develop on-going formation for members in Catholic social teaching.
- Reflect on the Catholic foundations of the work the members undertake.
- Identify areas of need within the Diocese of Leeds and to discuss how best to work to satisfy those needs.

- Encourage and promote social action wherever possible.
- Enable opportunities for two or several members to seek, if desired, to partner on one or several joint project/s.
- Encourage the use of the spiritual, human and material resources of the parish, deanery and diocese in the service of the poor*.
- Discuss informally through a closed online forum general matters related to social care/action and to seek advice on any matters from fellow members.

** Definition of 'poor' is wider than just material/financial.*

Model and Structure

The structure of Caritas Leeds will comprise an umbrella forum, convened at diocesan level by a Co-ordinator under the direction of the Diocesan Bishop, and modelled with respect to the canonical requirements of the Apostolic Letter '*On the Service of Charity*' issued by Pope Benedict XVI (December, 2012).

Steering Group Membership:

- Bishop of Leeds (Chair)
- Bishop's nominated Co-ordinator of Caritas Leeds
- Representative from the Council of Priests
- Representative from the Conference of Deacons
- Representative of Catholic Care
- Representative of the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission
- Representative of St Vincent de Paul Society
- Representative of St Monica Housing Trust
- Representative from the Vicariate for Education
- Representative from Leeds Trinity University (Theology Department)
- Diocesan Communications Officer
- Co-opted members as necessary

Operational start and finish group(s) will be constituted and informed by an annual action plan.

Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

- **Dignity of the human person:** every human person is seen as equal as he/she is lovingly and beautifully made in God's image and likeness. The other principles flow from this.
- **The Common Good:** human beings exist in relation to one another. We are called to live with others, aware of others, communicating, sharing, enjoying moments of joy and being there together in times of sadness. All of us are called to participate, to join in, and to work alongside others for the common good of all.
- **Solidarity:** we seek the good on one another, aware of our inter-dependence on one another. Pope St. John Paul II said: 'solidarity is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good' (The Social Concern of the Church 38). Peace flows from this. We are called to live honestly with one another, working together in love for the good of all. This is what will lead to true peace. Leave no person out-every person matters.
- **Subsidiarity** to make common decisions at the lowest practical level-every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community. 'Every person's contributions should count'.
- **Priority of labour over capital.** The right to work, to have a job, to earn money and so support your family are all connected to the dignity of the individual. Catholic social teaching affirms that human beings are not merely a commodity, a tool as part of a process to make things. Human beings are greater than anything. They deserve a fair wage and proper working conditions
- **Participation** the duty of all of us to contribute to the cultural, economic and social development of the community. Participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all, with responsibility and with a view to the common good. 'The duty of all of us to contribute'.
- **Option for the poor:** caring for those in poverty, both in our local neighbourhood and throughout the world, is a fundamental duty of us all. However, the preferential option for the poor goes further than this. In the Gospels Jesus, time and again shows a preferential option for the poor-putting them first, giving them special importance, thinking of their needs and enabling them to have their rightful place in the world. It is not enough simply to think of those living in poverty and try to help them. The voice of people living in poverty needs to be heard. We must enable them to be full part of the decision making process. We must enable those living in poverty to play a full role in society.
- **The Gift of Life and Creation.** God created the earth. Often, the way we treat creation leads to the harm of it and those living on it. Our destruction of the

earth for quick gain has repercussions for animals, for ourselves now and for generations to come. We need to treat the earth with respect.

- **The Call to Action:** to follow through in practical engagement the Gospel challenge to serve the Lord in our neighbours.

Rev Dr Joseph D Cortis
Co-ordinator of Caritas Leeds
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