



Newsletter – December 2021

CFSM Singapore
2 Highland Road, #03-12

THEME: PRINCIPLE OF SOLIDARITY IN THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

SITUATION: SEE

Going to Mozambique was a real eye opener, even for a well travelled person who has worked in Russia, Indonesia, China, US, Sweden, Australia, Canada, Brunei and Thailand. This small African nation of 30 million people is really money and asset poor.

As part of my work, Africa was the last continent for my exposure, and the reality really surprised me. The people were so poor that children are out in droves on the dusty street selling an egg, a banana, a tapioca piece!! Each banana is 10 cents!!!



The workers' wages are less than USD\$100 per month, and the higher professionals' wages are below a thousand. If lucky they can have a higher pay in an MNC, but those are few opportunities. Many, alas, are unemployed.

Most of the small shacks which they lived in have no electricity or water. The shelters are usually dark and unlit after 6pm in the evening. Ironically, while a mobile is an expensive luxury item yet here, the data purchased is only 50 cents for 10 GB per month from their telecoms.

Although we were not allowed to go out of the hotel on our own due to the concern that we might get infected with Covid 19 by the estimated 26% infected local population, I had the opportunity to visit the Catholic Church and the 3 priests. I was really disappointed with them because they don't seem to be interested in the poor people at all. To the questions like how the church helps the poor for food, water, education, shelters, they could only show me a miserable plot of land beside the priests' house, planting tapiocas by the parishioners, and their lovely renovated Church buildings, and the volunteer cooks and gardeners. That appears to be their reality. After giving some cash donations, I left feeling disturbed by the contradiction that the clergy seems to be well fed and clean, while the poor dirty children are running unsupervised on the streets. The small boys usually runs without any shirt and dressed only with short pants.

On the other hand, we have governments from Japan and China, helping the locals to build schools, bridges, hospitals, factories and other infrastructure. Some built with free grants, some with loans, and some with economic exchanges. Unfortunately, here there is no Singapore embassy or trade consulate which can feedback to our Foreign Ministry on the economic and social contributions we can make to this country.

I managed to make friends with some of the locals, and with my mobile google translator, visited their homes on Sundays. There I learnt that they usually have one meal per day, a meal of just an egg or tapioca. Rice is expensive and a luxury. Without water, they only bathe when the water truck comes once a week or they wash along in the streams or get cleaned by a wet cloth.

CAUSES

The country is wrecked by civil wars, terrorist attacks, government corruption, and weighed down by debts to other nations. There are no newspapers which can reach out to the masses for information and education. The social media is not much utilised as well. Most of the people are uneducated.

CONSEQUENCES

The majority of the people will remain poor, and so will be their children and later generation. Due to the disparity of wages and social standing, there are unrests and fatalities. Schools cannot operate well due to lack of resources too.

JUDGE

Although I am just passing through, being aware of the African society drew me to further understand the Principle of Solidarity which the Pope and the Church is working towards in its Mission of Christ. In particular, my prayer thoughts connected me to the Catholic Social Teachings of our Church.

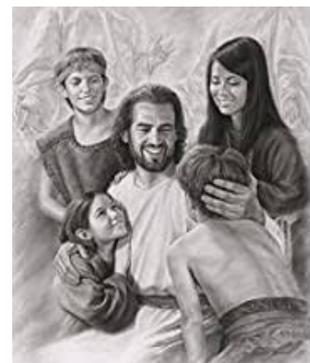
“Solidarity highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity. ... The acceleration of interdependence between persons and people needs to be accompanied by equally intense efforts on the ethical-social plane, in order to avoid the dangerous consequences of perpetrating injustice on a global scale”.

(Ref: *Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace*, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (2005), No. 192) [underlining by Editor].

What is this solidarity that the Pope speaks of?

John Paul’s answer connects us to the basic theme of the preferential love of the poor, a theme we hear anew from Pope Francis,

I discovered that Christ has the “preferential love of the poor” and that they are “God’s beloved poor” in who we have to reach out to, so that they can have with us “*the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity*.” This unity, I think is the principle of Solidarity. I pray that Christ will give me more understanding on this.



I feel this interdependence of persons, each having equality of dignity and rights, can have a committed unity, when in every level of the ethical-social plane we have shared and there is solidarity of love, care and concern. In my military training, we always tell each other we leave no man behind. In the ethical-social plane, we should not leave any God’s people behind.

ACT

My CFSM Chaplain Fr Dominique Deme has made us open our eyes wider, and that AWARENESS can be our educational tool and to be informed of others situations and plight. CFSM has helped me to

reflect on God's Words and Christ's mission to bring about the Good news. That is my personal action to bring awareness through the ROL.

On the base group level, we used the Review of Life (ROL) to help us be aware of ours and others situation, and calling on God to help us transform ourselves to love others as we also love our families. We take small steps and actions to bring about God's kingdom of Love, Justice and Peace.

In our regional and international meetings, we listen and make ourselves aware of other countries situation and how they also help bring about God's kingdom, to bring about solidarity for God's beloved Poor. Finally, I would like to thank the CFSM Publication Committee for giving me the opportunity to share my personal testimony in out of Africa.

By Vincent Woon
Secretary CFSM 2021

Editor's Note: We can learn more about the regions in our world by first learning more about the missions carried out by CARITAS, CHARIS, and organizations under CARITAS. In this way, we can venture to be more involved in these missions, or our own missions as an individual, in a small group or as a Movement.



***Father Dominique and the
CFSM Executive Committee
wish all CFSM members and
their families a Holy and***