



OUR SOCIAL MISSION

BY CARITAS SINGAPORE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Money – the root of all evil?

THE late Archbishop Emeritus Gregory Yong liked to tease his audience with true-or-false questions. One of his favourites was: “Money is the root of all evil. True or false?”

The answer is, false. St Paul’s famous line is often quoted incorrectly. The actual words are: “The love of money is the root of all evil.” (1 Timothy 6:10)

Indeed, it is the love of money that distracts us from our faith. Jesus makes this abundantly clear when he asks: “What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” (Mark 8:36) Instead, Jesus asks that we concern ourselves with what is permanent and lasting, our salvation, and not “what moth and rust can destroy and thieves can steal”. (Matthew 6:19)

St Paul’s words emphasise that it is not money, but our attitude to it that counts. Our attitude to money and wealth should be one of good stewardship.

Stewardship is a way of life for Christians. God alone disposes His gifts to us as He wishes. We are not true owners of these gifts but mere stewards caring for them. Our stewardship role starts from the beginning, when God created man and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it.

We are asked to have a sense of gratitude for whatever gifts God has bestowed on us. Not only should we treasure them while they are in our possession, but we are also to be fruitful with them and to grow and multiply the gifts, as illustrated in the parable of the talents. (Matthew 25:14-30)

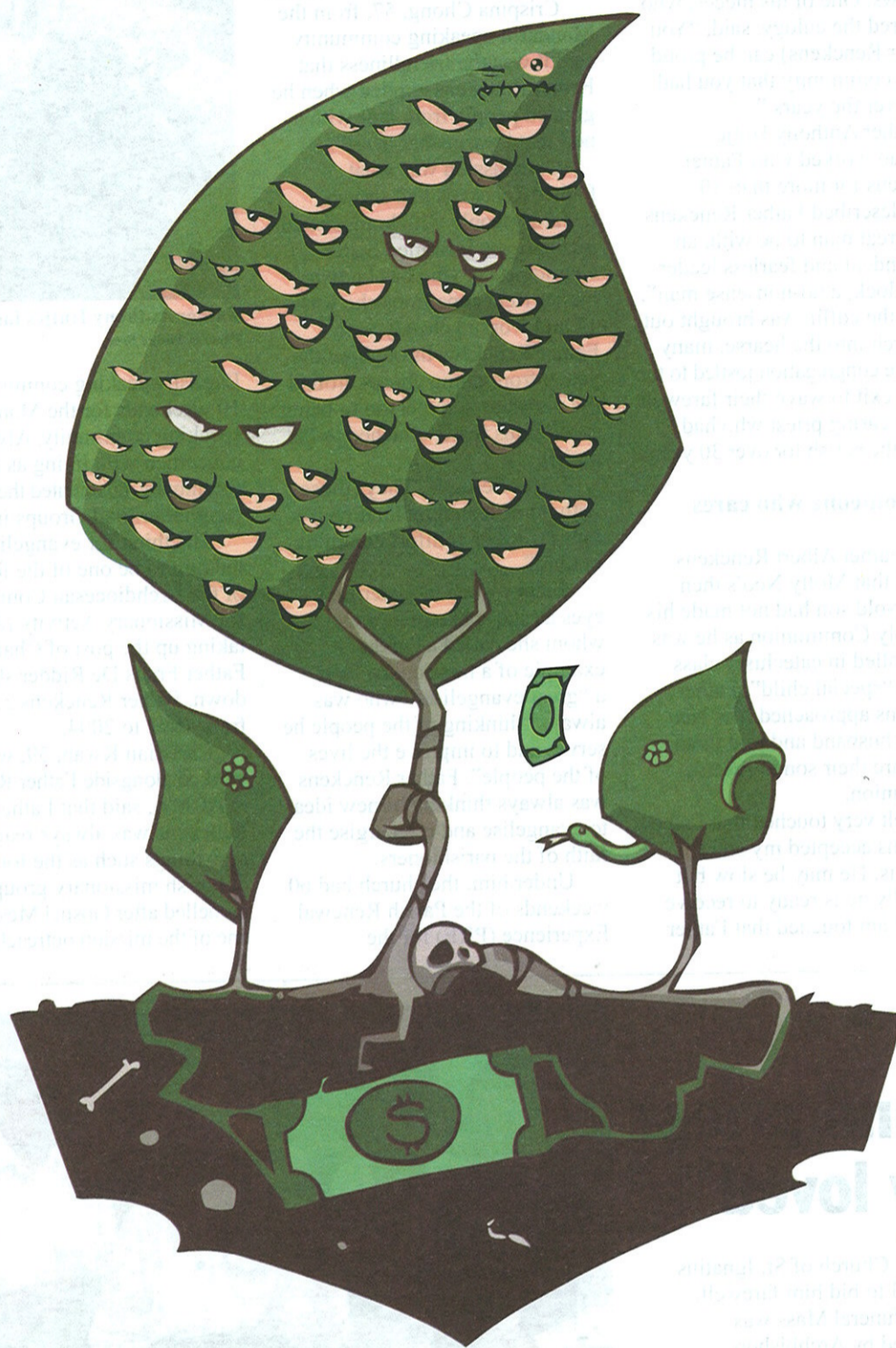
How we obtain and grow our wealth is important. It should be acquired by just and right means. We are to guard against dishonest business dealings, “Do not depend on dishonest wealth, for it will not benefit you in the day of calamity.” (Sirach 5:8)

Wealth should not be acquired by fraudulent means, exploiting or cheating other people, and in the process causing pain or harm to others. “He who oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or gives to the rich, will only come to want.” (Proverbs 22:16)

Even if we do no wrong ourselves in making our money, the Catholic Social Teachings advise us not to cooperate directly with evil in doing so. For example, we should not engage in or cooperate directly with activities related to human trafficking, arms sales, prostitution, pornography, exploitation of child labour, gambling, illegal drugs and so on.

A simple analogy of nurturing our wealth responsibly is to look at the creation of honey by bees collecting pollen from flowers. They do so without harming the flowers’ appearance whilst at the same time generating new life for the plants.

Good stewardship calls for us to share our wealth justly and charitably for the



Wealth can be a blessing or a stumbling block to our faith. In this continuing series on money, we see how good stewardship makes wealth a blessing to others.

benefit of others, in particular the poor and those marginalised by society.

Despite the economic growth of the last century, world poverty and hunger remain a huge problem. In fact, half of the world’s population – more than three billion people – live on less than US\$2 a day. Every year, more than nine million children die, usually from preventable diseases, before they are five years old. The list goes on.

Pope Benedict XVI in his 2009 message on the World Day of Peace emphasised that it is everyone’s responsibility to participate in healthy wealth creation and to help the poor. “In a modern economy, the value of assets is utterly dependent on the capacity to generate revenue in the present and the

future,” he said. “Wealth creation therefore becomes an inescapable duty, which must be kept in mind if the fight against material poverty is to be effective in the long term.” He called for a strong sense of global solidarity between rich and poor.

His call harks to the warning by Pope John Paul II “to abandon a mentality in which the poor – as individuals and as peoples – are considered a burden, as irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced”. (Centesimus Annus 28) Instead, both popes stress that the riches of creation are a common good of all humanity, and those who possess the various forms of wealth in a given society are meant to regard themselves as stewards,

ministers charged with working in the name of God.

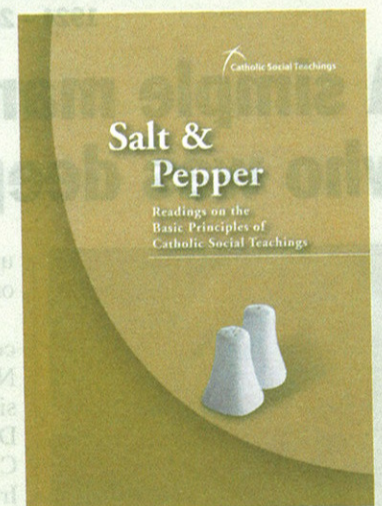
When wealth is correctly used, it is a powerful instrument to alleviate the problems of those in need. There are many examples in the Church of people who are generous to the poor.

One such example is Saint Hedwig, the Queen of Poland from 1382-1399. Although she was rich, she was noted for her charity to all, especially the sick and the poor and for bringing about a revision of the laws to help the poor. For the wealthy, she is a model of how to live and put into practice Christ’s teaching about love and mercy.

So when we create wealth responsibly and use it for the benefit of those around us, we are in fact returning the gifts to God abundantly. Such a disposition toward wealth is important because it helps us understand the real purpose of our blessings and not allow the riches to dominate our hearts.

That is when the love of God and the love of our fellow man – and not the love of money – empowers us.

Spice up your spiritual intake of Catholic Social Teachings



EVERY fortnight, this page in Catholic News has featured articles on various aspects of Catholic Social Teachings. A number of selected articles have now been compiled into a booklet, *Salt & Pepper: Readings on the Basic Principles of Catholic Social Teachings*.

The booklet will be distributed to parishioners on Lay Apostolate Sunday (the weekend of August 15/16, 2009). As lay apostles, we are called to live our Christian vocation in our daily life. Our Catholic Social Teachings tell us how we can live our faith in our dealings with our fellow men.

So make sure to pick up your copy from your parish on Lay Apostolate Sunday.