**Chapter II**

**AIC’s Mission**

* AIC’s Vision and Mission
* **The Foundations of AIC’s Mission**
  + - The Gospel
    - St Vincent’s values
    - **The Social Doctrine of the Church**
* AIC’s Journey

**The Foundations of AIC’s Mission**

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| ***The Church’s Social Doctrine***  Saint Vincent truly loved the Church, while still recognizing her faults and failings. He always thought that the community of believers was called to holiness and to perfection in the Christian life. For him, this perfection lay in charity and “*practical holiness, always and in everything doing the will of God”.* (Coste XII, p. 150, n. 199).  What we now call the Church’s Social Doctrine has been in the course of development since the 19th century. The encyclical Octogesima Adveniens (written for the 80th anniversary of the first social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo) tells us: “*It is up to the Christian communities to analyse with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words... and, in dialogue with our Christian brothers and sisters and all women and men of goodwill, to determine the options and commitments to be made in order to bring about the transformations that seem urgent and necessary”* (Oct. Adv. 3-4).  The Church’s Social Doctrine proclaims the **truth** of the love of Christ that is always new.TheEncyclical *Deus Caritas* (God is love) expresses for today **the essential elements of Christian charity**:   * *“Immediate need (Good Samaritan) met by professional competence and heartfelt concern;* * *Independent of parties and ideologies;* * *Charity cannot be used at the service of what is now called proselytism. Love is free”* (DC 31).   For Benedict XVI, justice and charity belong to **two different spheres, which are nonetheless related**:   * **Justice** is the primary task of the State: the building of a just order of society and of the State, through which each person receives their due, is a fundamental duty, which each generation has to confront in its turn. Charity does not take the place of justice. * **Organised charitable activity** is true humanism, which recognises the image of God in human beings and wants to bring them to lead a life in conformity with this dignity (DC 30b). Love is needed beyond justice and is irreplaceable (DC 28b).   Underlying justice and charity are two basic principles: **unconditional respect for human life and the dignity of every human person**. From these arise the other proposals for a more just society.  **Five pillars** are named among those in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004, Ch4) needed to organise a society that is at the service of the person:   * **The common good**: *“The common good means the set of social conditions that allow social groups and their individual members thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment”* (GS 26 § 1; cf. GS 74 § 1). * **The universal destination of goods**: In the end everything belongs to God. We are only temporary stewards. * **Subsidiarity**: The Church considers that decisions must as far as possible be taken by the people who will feel their possible consequences. This principle, also called the “principle of help”, which states that it is an error that goes against morality and charity to let something be done at too high a level when it can it be done at a lower level as by doing so, we will deprive the lower level of everything it can do. * **Participation:** As a consequence of the previous principle, each person must be able to take part in making decisions that concern him or her. This is not a vague or simply democratic idea. It is a principle that is deeply rooted in the definition of the human being personally loved by God. * **Solidarity**: This is a consequence of the four previous pillars. Human beings are called to be at one with each other, so that they can help those who are less skilful, less knowledgeable or have fewer resources. Everyone is at the service of everyone else, but especially of the poorest people.   By being with the poorest, as Christ was, we become a Christian society. | 3rd Source:  Saint Vincent loved the Church  The Church’s Social Doctrine: bringing the message of Christ up to date  Experience on the ground feeds the reflection of the Church  Justice and Charity - 2 paths to achieve this:  The action of the State responsible for justice  Organized charitable work  The essentials:  Each human being is personally loved by God  All are equal in dignity    The five pillars:  The common good  The universal destination of goods  Subsidiarity  Participation  Solidarity  The preferential option for the poor |

**Questions to reflect on in groups:**

1. **How does the Church’s Social Doctrine affect our commitment as AIC volunteers?**
2. **What elements of Christian charity were expressed by Benedict XVI? How do these definitions help you in your AIC work?**
3. **Reflect on the five pillars of the Church’s Social Doctrine and note your comments.**