

# Report by Religious Think-Tank Examines What it Means to be a Catholic Charity Today

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Father Hudson's Care

**LEADING RELIGIOUS THINK-TANK, Theos, has published a report into Catholic charities and how they put Catholic Social Teaching (CST) into practice in their work. Theos conducted research with six Catholic charities, including Father Hudson's Care and Caritas Archdiocese of Birmingham (AOB). The other charities involved were the Apostleship of the Sea, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society and two marriage charities, Worldwide Marriage Encounter and Retrouvaille.**

The research looked at what it means to be a Catholic charity, how each organisation puts Catholic principles into practice and the relationship between the charities and the Church.

All of the charities involved embodied six themes of CST in their work – option for the poor, subsidiarity, solidarity, personalism, family and evangelism – although some of the terms used to describe these were not always understood. The report highlights the many diverse ways in which charities put these principles into practice.

The report praised the charities for their work with the poor and vulnerable, and for recognising that poverty can include isolation and social barriers. The author, Ben Ryan, interviewed members



Young at Heart is a community project run by Father Hudson's Care to meet local needs in Stoke and North Staffs

of staff, volunteers and service users and quoted a worker at Father Hudson's as saying, 'that's what comes of a Catholic charity – an explicit focus to find those who fall through the gaps and are on the margins.' The report goes on to say

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that 'Father Hudson's Care in fact had some interesting examples of this, both in its homes, day centre and support work for adults with disabilities and in some of its community projects that worked closely with asylum seekers and immigrant groups.'



Running English classes for asylum seekers and migrant groups breaks down barriers and encourages community integration

Recognising and promoting human dignity was a key theme of all the charities involved. Father Hudson's Care prides itself on seeing the person, not any label they come with – an attitude that was recognised in the report, which quotes a Trustee saying, 'It defines everything in my work. It's that Matthew 25 idea of looking at people and saying, 'you have value in my eyes'. That's what we do – we find the value in people.' The report goes on to note that Father Hudson's commitment to dignity is valued by service users, quoting the brother of a resident who spoke of how pleased he was that his brother could live a 'full life in his 60s thanks to the help of Father Hudson's... He takes himself to church, he goes to Birmingham City football matches with a carer and overall he's helped to live as independently as possible.'

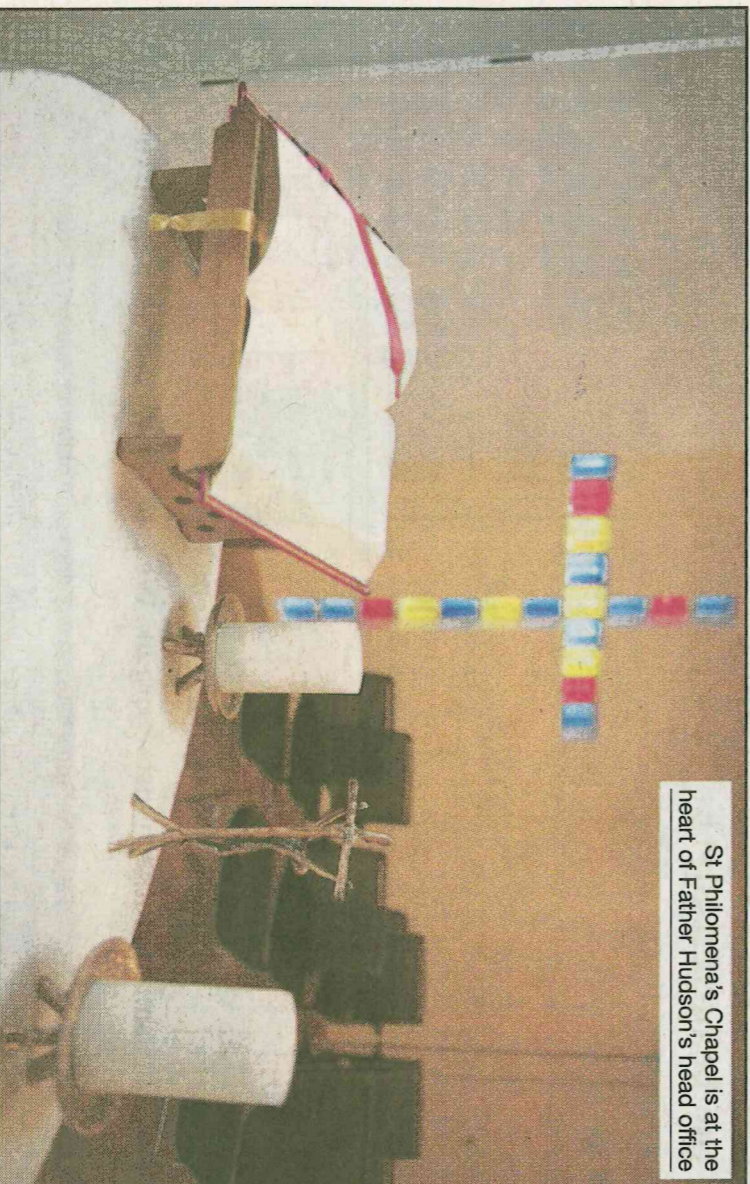
One finding of the report was that the principle of subsidiarity –

tackling local problems on a local level – was well practiced, noting that this is a 'defining feature' of Caritas AOB, as a 'network designed to empower and support local projects.' Researchers also highlighted that the way Father Hudson's works with and supports local community projects is another way of putting subsidiarity into practice to ensure that solutions meet local needs. The report also points out that in working this way both Father Hudson's and Caritas AOB show solidarity, working towards a common good that embodies the value of the Gospel.

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The report also looked at the relationship between Catholic charities and the Church, concluding that they have a reciprocal relationship and that strengthening this would be greatly beneficial to both parties. The researchers pointed out that many charities rely heavily on the Church for funding and volunteers. In turn, they provide a public face of Catholic social action, showing how Catholic principles make a difference in society and offering a way to embed Catholic teaching in society.

The importance of being a Catholic charity and having a Catholic ethos varied within and between charities, particularly when it came to clashes between Church doctrines and public



St Philomena's Chapel is at the heart of Father Hudson's head office

Catholic ethos is beneficial as some service users assumed that it would guarantee a level of Christian care and concern. The report mentions a service user of Father Hudson's who initially not been bothered that the charity was Catholic but that 'subsequently he had come to feel that 'there was something different about the place – hard to identify – but a sort of different sense of purpose, that I guess could well be something to do with their faith.' He went on to say that 'if they stopped being a faith-based charity I think I would want to know the reason for that, and what about it would be different.'

The full report can be found on the Theos website, [www.theosthinktank.co.uk](http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk).