

OFFICE OF LIFE AND JUSTICE AND PEACE



One of the Pharisees tested Jesus with a question, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments" (MT 22: 36-40).

As Director of the Office of Life, Justice and Peace I am charged, and my vision is, to promote the social ministry of the Catholic Church — respect for all human life, advocacy for the poor, seeking economic justice, and good stewardship of God's creation — throughout the archdiocese by providing inspiration, advocacy, education, and prayer opportunities for parish staff and volunteer social ministry leaders. The foundation of this social ministry, indeed the foundation of this office, is Catholic social teaching.

Catholic social teaching contains seven principles. Which is the greatest principle?

The fundamental principle is "Life and Dignity of the Human Person": "We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person."

"Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all principles of our social teaching."

The second is like it, "Option for the Poor and Vulnerable": "A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring...our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first."

This preferential option for the poor and vulnerable includes all who are marginalized in our nation and beyond—unborn children, persons with disabilities, elderly and victims of injustice or oppression.

The two Offices of Justice and Peace and Respect Life were once separate but they were naturally combined because these two principles of Catholic social teaching, which stand out among the others, were already the foundation of both offices. Only the titles that kept them apart, not the core missions.

Therefore, the priorities of my office are outlined in my vision statement, which I will repeat: To inspire and form Catholic disciples to build God's kingdom of justice and faithfully witness His love. Empowered by the many gifts of the Holy Spirit, we ground ourselves in Catholic social teaching.

And I believe the Justice and Peace and Respect Life ministries are embarking on identical missions: respecting all human life with a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. That is why the two offices were combined and why I urge these same parishes ministries to collaborate—walking the same paths.



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