

Catholic Social Thought and the Economy

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Outline

- 1 Motivation
- 2 Principles of CST and USCCB on Economic Life
- 3 Solutions
- 4 Scripture and Resources

Economy of Francesco

- In November 2019, Pope Francis called for a meeting in Assisi to encounter young economists, entrepreneurs, and change makers.
- The goal of the meeting was to enter a "covenant to change today's economy and give a soul to the economy of tomorrow."
- Specifically by promoting a humane, life giving economy, that not only cares for the poor and marginalized, but also the environment.
- Raises the question: What is it about our economic life that needs conversion?

Our Economic Reality

- Despite the United States being a very wealthy country, we still have problems.
- We have inequality in health, mortality, education, labor market, and criminal justice outcomes by Socioeconomic Status and Racial and Ethnic Status.
- The Pandemic has also had disproportionate effects on Americans by SES status and race/ethnicity in terms of unemployment, sickness and even death/hospitalization.
- Rising inequality since the 1940s and persistent racial, ethnic and gender gaps in many outcomes have lead many to feel disillusioned with our economy.

Our Economic Reality

- In order to provide criteria to judge our reality the USCCB has given the following principles for evaluating economic life.
- These principles are derived from elements of Catholic Social Teaching, including Subsidiarity, Solidarity, the Preferential Option for the Poor, and the Universal Destination of Goods.

Principles for Judgement of the Economy

Principle 1: The economy exists for the person not the person for the economy.

Principle 2: All economic life should be shaped by moral principles. Economic choices and institutions must be judged by how they

- 1 protect or undermine the life and dignity of the human person
- 2 support the family
- 3 serve the common good

Principle 3: A fundamental moral measure of any economy is how the poor, marginalized and vulnerable are faring.

Distribution of Goods and Opportunities

Principle 4: All people have a right to life and to secure the basic necessities of life

- 1 food, water, clothing, shelter
- 2 education, health care, and safety
- 3 economic and environmental security

Principle 5: All people have the right to

- 1 Economic initiative
- 2 Productive work and Just Wages
- 3 Decent working conditions
- 4 Join unions and other associations

Duties to each other and society

Principle 6: All people to the extent they are able

- have a corresponding duty to work
- a responsibility to provide for the needs of their families
- a responsibility to contribute to the broader society

Roles of Institutions

Principle 7: In economic life;

- free markets have both clear advantages and limits;
- government has essential responsibilities and limitations;
- voluntary groups have irreplaceable roles, but cannot substitute for the proper working of the market and the just policies of the state.

Principle 8: Society has a moral obligation including governmental action where necessary

- to assure opportunity
- meet basic human needs
- and pursue justice in economic life

Our responsibilities

Principle 9: Workers, owners, managers, stockholders and consumers are moral agents in economic life.

- By our choices, initiative, creativity and investment, we enhance or diminish economic opportunity, community life and social justice.

Principle 10: The global economy has moral dimensions and human consequences.

- Decisions on investment, trade, aid and development should protect human life and promote human rights, especially for those most in need wherever they might live on this globe.

What do we do about it?

- What are ways we can go about transforming the economy?
- The answer depends a lot on your specific situation, but there are many ways we can build a more just economy.
- Two things we should focus on is the spiritual and practical aspects of our economic life.

Spiritual: Worldly Economy vs Christian Economy

Many of our problems in the economy also have to do with how we live our lives in the economy. It helps to contrast characteristics of a worldly economy vs one centered on Christ.

- 1 Economic Life Divorced from Morality vs Living Out the Gospel in Economic Life
- 2 Excessive Focus on the Individual vs Recognizing the Interconnectness of Humanity and Creation.
- 3 Success as growth, wealth, satisfaction of desires vs success as serving humanity, creation and the common good.

Spiritual Values vs Worldy Values

- We should practice spiritual poverty vs pursuing greed and status.
- We should live in a spirit of gratitude vs a spirit of scarcity.
- We should become better stewards vs better accumulators and possessors.
- Rather than pursue self gratification be willing to make sacrifices and take risks.
- Instead of living in a mindset of competition we'd do well to cooperate and remember our interdependence.
- Live a culture of encounter vs avoidance and mastery, "work with, think with, learn from the poor vs ignoring or working and thinking for them."

Practical Side:

- There are many opportunities we have in our different roles in the economy.
- Entrepreneurs: Pay attention to the needs of the community, and serve all stakeholders including creation.
- Managers: Serve your workers and their needs, including good wages, mobility, time off, health, and family. Perhaps take a risk in hiring someone unconventional.
- Workers: faithfully execute obligations, but also providing time, money and love to your family.
- Consumers: Stay Awake, be aware of what you are consuming and the effects of it.

Policy and Community

- Community attributes below are associated with good economic outcomes
 - 1 Less Segregation
 - 2 Less Income Inequality
 - 3 More school funding and better quality schools
 - 4 Stronger Family structures, i.e. higher fatherhood presence
 - 5 Strong Social Capital ¹
- For ethnic and racial inequality, we can not escape the effect of the criminal justice system and immigration.
- Evidence of racial and ethnic profiling in police interactions, hiring decisions, and renting of services.
- Rising Healthcare costs are also more likely to affect the poor negatively.
- We also can't ignore the effect of our policies on the environment or the important role that women play in our economy.

Good News: The Church Gives us Opportunities to Address this

- Stay informed. Learn about the impacts of economic policy, and our consumption patterns in terms of effect on workers, environment and the marginalized.
- Support businesses that provide good job opportunities, wages, and care for creation like All Square, providing jobs for the Formerly Incarcerated and Fructus assisting Catholic farmers and ethically raised farm products.
- Support Catholic Education: Catholic Tutor Corps, Ascension Catholic Schools, Christo Rey Jesuit High School and initiatives that give parents more choice in education.
- Support Catholic Health initiatives that treat the poor and uninsured and Sharing and Caring Hands that give food for the poor.
- Support Prison Ministry, All Square, and social justice initiatives run and sponsored by Catholic Advocacy Network and the Archdiocese.

Good News Continued

- Learn more about the effects of racial, ethnic, gender bias and attend dialogue and listening sessions to learn first hand from people affected.
- Build community with other parishes and our neighbors throughout the city, by volunteering, serving at mass, attending parish events, and buying from small businesses throughout the cities.
- Support our Sister Parish in Tijuana to serve our southern neighbors.
- Strengthen our families, our prayer life, and bring Christ to our world.
- Don't be afraid to encounter, work with, and learn from people who are different than you, including the marginalized and the stranger.
- "Without cost you have received, without cost you are to give."
Matthew 10:8. So give your time, talent and treasure freely!

Pray with Scripture

The following Gospel Passages

- The Parable of the Rich Fool, Luke 12:16-34
- The Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31
- The Rich Young Man, Matthew 19:16-22
- The Judgment of the Nations, Matthew 25:31-46
- The Good Samaritan, Luke 10: 29-37
- The Beautitudes, Luke 6:20-26, Matthew 5:1-12

Resources and Links

Books

- Following Christ in a Consumer Society: John F Kavanaugh
- Poor Economics, Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee
- Good Economics for Hard Times, Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee
- A Catholic Spirituality for Business: The Logic of Gift Edited by Martin Schlag & Domenec Mele

Web Resources

- <http://www.povertyusa.org/>
- <https://www.usccb.org/resources/catholic-framework-economic-life-0>
- <https://www.usccb.org/committees/ad-hoc-committee-against-racism>
- <https://opportunityinsights.org/>