

## Notable quotations from Catholic social teaching on the theme of Rights and Duties

"If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them. Not only is justice not extraneous to charity, not only is it not an alternative or parallel path to charity: justice is inseparable from charity, and intrinsic to it. Justice is the primary way of charity or, in Paul VI's words, "the minimum measure" of it 2, an integral part of the love "in deed and in truth" (1 Jn 3:18), to which Saint John exhorts us. On the one hand, charity demands justice: recognition and respect for the legitimate rights of individuals and peoples. It strives to build the earthly city according to law and justice. On the other hand, charity transcends justice and completes it in the logic of giving and forgiving<sup>3</sup>"

[Caritas in Veritate](#), 6.

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Beginning our discussion of the rights of the human person, we see that everyone has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services.

Therefore a human being also has the right to security in cases of sickness, inability to work, widowhood, old age, unemployment, or in any other case in which one is deprived of the means of subsistence through no fault of one's own.

[Peace on Earth](#), 11

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The natural rights with which we have been dealing are inseparably connected, in the very person who is their subject, with just as many respective duties; and rights as well as duties find their source, their sustenance and their inviolability in the natural law which grants or enjoins them.

Those, therefore, who claim their own rights, yet altogether forget or neglect to carry out their respective duties, are people who build with one hand and destroy with the other. Since men are social by nature they are meant to live with others and to work for one another's welfare.

A well-ordered human society requires that men recognize and observe their mutual rights and duties. It also demands that each contribute generously to the establishment of a civic order in which rights and duties are more sincerely and effectively acknowledged and fulfilled.

It is not enough, for example, to acknowledge and respect every man's right to the means of subsistence if we do not strive to the best of our ability for a sufficient supply of what is necessary for his sustenance.

[Peace on Earth](#), 28-32

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It is agreed that in our time the common good is chiefly guaranteed when personal rights and duties are maintained. The chief concern of civil authorities must therefore be to ensure that these rights are acknowledged, respected, coordinated with other rights, defended and promoted, so that in this way everyone may more easily carry out their duties. For "to safeguard the inviolable rights of the human person, and to facilitate the fulfillment of each one's duties, should be the chief duty of every public authority."

[Peace on Earth](#), #60

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Human rights are the minimum conditions for life in community. In Catholic teaching, human rights include not only civil and political rights but also economic rights.... This means that when people are without a chance to earn a living, and must go hungry and homeless, they are being denied basic rights. Society must ensure that these rights are protected.

[Economic Justice for All](#), #17

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These fundamental duties can be summarized this way: basic justice demands the establishment of minimum levels of participation in the life of the human community for all persons. The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were nonmembers of the human race. To treat people this way is effectively to say they simply do not count as human beings.

[Economic Justice for All](#), #77

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...internationally accepted human rights standards are strongly supported by Catholic teaching. These rights include the civil and political rights to freedom of speech, worship, and assembly. A number of human rights also concern human welfare and are of a specifically economic nature.

First among these are the rights to life, food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and basic education. These are indispensable to the protection of human dignity. ... All persons have a right to security in the event of sickness, unemployment, and old age ... the right to healthful working conditions, to wages, and other benefits sufficient to provide individuals and their families with a standard of living in keeping with human dignity, and to the possibility of property ownership.

[Economic Justice for All](#), #80

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These fundamental personal rights -- civil and political as well as social and economic -- state the minimum conditions for social institutions that respect human dignity, social solidarity, and justice. They are all essential to human dignity and to the integral development of both individuals and society, and are thus moral issues. Any denial of these rights harms persons and wounds the human community. Their serious and sustained denial violates individuals and destroys solidarity among persons.

[Economic Justice for All](#), #80

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It is also demanded by the common good that civil authorities should make earnest efforts to bring about a situation in which individual citizens can easily exercise their rights and fulfill their duties as well.

For experience has taught us that, unless these authorities take suitable action with regard to economic, political and cultural matters, inequalities between the citizens tend to become more and more widespread... and as a result human rights are rendered totally ineffective and the fulfillment of duties is compromised.

[Peace on Earth](#), #63

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Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that every human being is a person, that is, human nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because one is a person one has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from one's very nature. And as these rights and obligations are universal and inviolable, so they cannot in any way be surrendered.

[Peace on Earth](#), #9

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In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due the poor and the special situation they have in society: the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others.

[A Call to Action](#), 23

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This means that, if any government does not acknowledge the rights of man or violates them, it not only fails in its duty, but its orders completely lack juridical force.

[Peace on Earth](#), 61

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The obligation to earn one's bread presumes the right to do so. A society that denies this right cannot be justified, nor can it attain social peace.

[The Hundredth Year](#), 43

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There is a growing awareness of the sublime dignity of human persons, who stand above all things and whose rights and duties are universal and inviolable. They ought, therefore, to have ready access to all that is necessary for living a genuinely human life: for example, food, clothing, housing, the right freely to choose their state of life and set up a family, the right to education, work, to their good name, to respect, to proper knowledge, the right to act according to the dictates of conscience and to safeguard their privacy, and rightful freedom, including freedom of religion.

[The Church in the Modern World](#), 26

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The economic challenge of today has many parallels with the political challenge that confronted the founders of our nation. In order to create a new form of political democracy they were compelled to develop ways of thinking and political institutions that had never existed before. Their efforts were arduous and their goals imperfectly realized, but they launched an experiment in the protection of civil and political rights that has prospered through the efforts of those who came after them. We believe the time has come for a similar experiment in securing economic rights: the creation of an order that guarantees the minimum conditions of human dignity in the economic sphere for every person.

[Economic Justice for All](#), 95

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... It is clearly laid down that the paramount task assigned to government officials is that of recognizing, respecting, reconciling, protecting and promoting the rights and duties of citizens.

[Peace on Earth](#), 77

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Securing economic rights for all will be an arduous task. There are a number of precedents in the U.S. history, however, which show that the work has already begun [41]. The country needs a serious dialogue about the appropriate levels of private and public sector involvement that are needed to move forward. There is certainly room for diversity of opinion in the Church and in U.S. society on \*how\* to protect the human dignity and economic rights of all our brothers and sisters [42]. In our view, however, there can be no legitimate disagreement on the basic moral objectives.

[Economic Justice for All](#), 84

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Thus the person who possesses certain rights has likewise the duty to claim those rights as marks of human dignity, while all others have the obligation to acknowledge those rights and respect them.

[Peace on Earth](#), 44

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Human rights are closely linked to the church's mission in the world. They are the basis of social and international peace. What social, economic, political, or cultural program that describes itself as "humanistic" could fail to bring "the human person" to the fore? Yet human rights are violated, undermining these humanistic premises.

[Redeemer of Humanity](#), 17