

## **Social doctrine in print**

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Our ideas about being human help to construct our morals and ethics. The word moral comes from Latin, the word ethics comes from Greek. How individual lives are affected by the social and political has everything to do with the weight we give to certain values. While there are many values, the ancients bequeathed us justice, temperance, prudence and fortitude. Faith, hope and charity are familiar to us.

Well informed Catholics can access journals and periodicals that give lengthy treatments to important social issues. The Catholic Moment's mission is more in line with pointing to issues that deserve our attention. At another angle, even brief news snippets can tell us that there are issues for which we share responsibility. Degrees of responsibility can be explored, even if not settled. Yet another part of our mission is reminding the reader that because the Church cares about its people, it has accumulated social stances about economies, medicine, genetic research, and the proper uses of government. Sometimes popes make their own statements, and groups of bishops have crafted many over the past century.

A Catholic newspaper should flag topics of religious and political interest, topics where each sphere influences the other. During the past year, we printed a lengthy treatment about suicide and suicide prevention. Other subjects will demand our attention and prayer if the recent past is any preview. Take as examples: human ecology, protecting human life, widening income disparity, firearms and ammunition access, genetic medicine, surrogate pregnancy, gender identity, available fresh water, privacy protection, race based inequality, the push for renewable energy sources, and the treatment of migrants and refugees.

Here in Indiana, the federal prison at Terre Haute has announced that it will execute five people in the next few months. Sometimes it is not enough to simply quote (or criticize) criminal law codes or catechisms if we don't know the reasoning behind their texts and how they are used. What happens in other states and countries can greatly inform our viewpoint. And, if I may say so here, the broader view helps us to understand why recent popes have said that the death penalty cannot be supported in this modern era.

What we pay attention to says a lot about us. What we choose to overlook may say even more. It is a Catholic thing to judge the worth of public action. We do it especially because we think about children and grandchildren inheriting the social space that we shaped or neglected.