

March/April 2018

Let Catholic social teaching shape your new year



Photo Credit: [CRS Catholic Social Teaching 101 Video Series](#)

(Editor Note: This is a summary of an article from the January 2018 issue of U.S. Catholic Reporter.

For more detail on each topic, please read the whole article online [HERE.](#))

What is Catholic Social Teaching?

- The term *Catholic social teaching* refers to the body of doctrine created by the church to help apply the teachings of Jesus Christ to the modern world. It serves as the moral compass for justice issues related to economic, social, and political life.
- Catholic social teaching is rooted in the biblical belief that all people are created in the image of God—and should be able to live as such.
- There are rights and responsibilities that need to be upheld in order for everyone's dignity to be respected.
- It puts Christ's criteria for the final judgment front and center: Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, and visit the sick and imprisoned.

Here are descriptions of and ideas for acting out the principles of Catholic social teaching in 2018.

What will YOU resolve to do this new year?

God created humanity in God's own image and likeness (Gen. 1:27). As God's beloved creation, we—all people—have dignity that's inherent to our human person. Nothing and no one can take our dignity away.

The principle of human dignity is the foundation for all Catholic social teaching. It affirms the sacredness of every person, recognizing that within our different abilities and backgrounds we share a common humanity and a common brokenness.

Resolutions

- *Participate in Christian-Muslim dialogue*
- *Go shopping with a refugee family*
- *Consume media with discerning eyes and ears*

Call to family, community, and participation

We all have abilities to make a difference. Catholic social teaching demands we use our gifts to better the common good—the good that comes when all in society can live fulfilled lives.

Resolutions

- *Schedule a monthly family fun day*
- *Assist a teacher whose class includes students with disabilities*
- *Knock on doors to help with voter registration*

Rights and responsibilities

Society acknowledges human dignity by ensuring people have the rights to live dignified lives. This includes rights to food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and economic security in times of hardship.

Catholics view such rights in the context of community. Individuals contribute to the common good when they can live out their callings to the fullest. It is hard to make the world a better place on an empty stomach or without a place to sleep. We are responsible for helping one another flourish.

Resolutions

- *Start a lunchtime conversation group at work to discuss social justice issues*

- *Commit to regularly calling your local and state representatives*
- *Protest peacefully outside your state capital*

Option for the poor and vulnerable

Jesus proclaimed, “Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” Following his message, Catholic social teaching asserts whenever we are given a choice, we should choose the option that best serves those people in greatest need.

Resolutions

- *Give directly to the poor*
- *Share a meal at your local Catholic Worker house*
- *Offer your skills to a homeless shelter*

The dignity of work and the rights of workers

A Catholic theology of work understands that people work to provide basic needs for themselves and their families. Work is also a primary way to discover our God-given abilities. In his social encyclical celebrating the 100th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope John Paul II writes that work is the human response to God’s gift. As such, the church calls employers to honor laborers with just wages and opportunities to take on new responsibilities. Further, Catholic social teaching favors labor unions to work communally for justice in the workplace and deems unemployment an evil.

Resolutions

- *Buy fair trade items*
- *Mentor a college student or person new to your field*
- *Volunteer as a job coach at a correctional facility*

Solidarity

Jesus preaches solidarity in his Sermon on the Mount when the Son of God tells the disciples he is the hungry, the thirsty, the naked. Solidarity begins with an encounter. People practicing solidarity understand that all of humanity is part of one family “whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences may be” (USCCB).

The practice of solidarity demands that we tend to the needs of all individuals, especially the poor and vulnerable. As the saying goes, when one hurts, we all hurt.

Resolutions

- *Befriend someone of a different background*

- *Practice moderation*
- *Worship with people of other faiths*

Care for God's creation

The world and all its creatures are gifts from God the Creator. Catholic social teaching invites us to experience the world through a sacramental lens, finding God in the rustling winds, chirping birds, and the entire natural world. It also laments environmental degradation. The church calls us to be good stewards of the earth's resources.

Resolutions

- *Set up a compost station in your house*
- *Garden*
- *Road trip to a state or national park*

Make 2018 your year to commit to Catholic social teaching.

Start with one or two concrete ways you can honor human dignity and better the common good. Encourage your neighbors to do the same.

Together we will bring forth the kingdom of God one step at a time.

[Source: US Catholic Reporter](#)