

Catholic Social Teaching

"Catholic social teaching emerges from the truth of what God has revealed to us about himself. We believe in the triune God whose very nature is communal and social. God the Father sends his only Son Jesus Christ and shares the Holy Spirit as his gift of love. God reveals himself to us as one who is not alone, but rather as one who is relational, one who is Trinity. Therefore, we who are made in God's image share this communal, social nature. We are called to reach out and to build relationships of love and justice. Catholic social teaching is based on and inseparable from our understanding of human life and human dignity. Human dignity comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment."—United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Life and Dignity of the Human Person

We believe in the rights of the human person from conception until natural death. We believe that all life is sacred and that respect for the dignity of the human person is a vital foundation of a moral society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of Catholic social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and other similar immoral laboratory procedures.

Protection of the Family; Call to Community and Participation

The human person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society in economics and politics, in law and policy, directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, and not undermined.

We believe all people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity helps us think about how to organize political communities. It holds that decisions should be made at the lowest level possible, with higher levels of authority intervening only if the lower levels are unable to accomplish a task as well or as efficiently. Subsidiarity is ultimately about building stronger communities in which government is a necessary—but not the only—form of social organization. Catholics believe that a well-ordered society is one in which institutions large and small, sacred and secular, and public and private come together to work for the common good.



Rights and Responsibilities

Following the theme of the dignity of all humans, the Church teaches that every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.



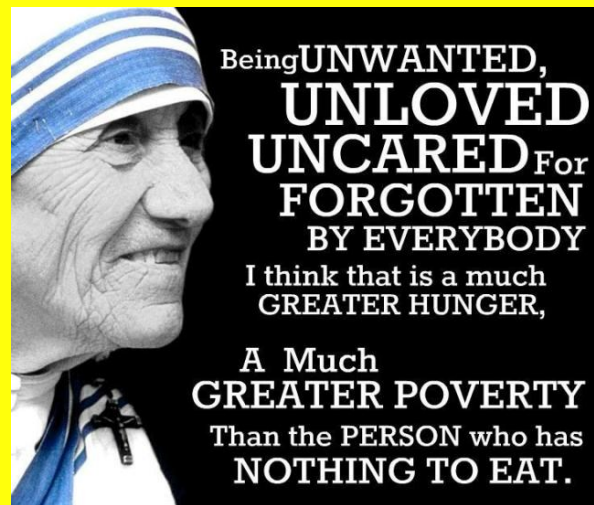
People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do.

— Dorothy Day —

Preferential Option for the Poor

A basic moral test of our society is to look at how our most vulnerable members are faring. The Church puts the poor and vulnerable at the very top of her priority list. This is even stated in

the Code of Canon Law, which reads: "The Christian faithful are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor." Jesus made it quite clear that what we do to the least of the brethren, we do to Him. The Catholic Church has started more hospitals, schools, and charities than any other organization worldwide, in response to this call from our Lord.



The Dignity of Work & Rights of Workers and the Common Good

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected, such as the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

Likewise, the Church is concerned with the common good of all which the Catechism defines as: "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily." The three essential elements for the common good are: respect for the individual, the social well-being and development of the people, and the peace which results from the stability of a just society.

Solidarity



We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions, and applies to the human family as a whole. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and

peace. Pope Paul VI taught that "if you want peace, work for justice." The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict. This is something that should be close to the heart of every Catholic, as a member of the worldwide and universal Church.

Care of Creation

The Lord created the earth and entrusted it to humanity. We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of His creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

