



Twelve Major Lessons of Catholic Social Teaching

Link of Religious and Social Dimensions of Life:

The “social” – the human construction of the world is not “secular” in the sense of being outside of God’s plan, but is intimately involved in the dynamic of the Reign of God. Therefore faith and justice are necessarily linked together [The Church in the World]

Sacredness and Dignity of the Human Person:

Made in the image of God, the human person has a preeminent place in the social order. Human dignity can be recognized and protected only in community with others. The fundamental question to ask about social development is: What is happening to people? [Peace on Earth]

Option for the Poor:

A preferential love should be shown to all vulnerable people, whose needs and rights are given special attention in God’s eyes. “Poor” is understood to refer to not just the economically disadvantaged whom, as a consequence of their status, suffer oppression, but also all powerless individuals, including children. [Call to Action]

Political and Economic Rights:

All human persons enjoy inalienable rights, which are political/legal [e.g., right to life, vote, free speech, migration] and social/economic [e.g., food, shelter, work, education]. These are realized in community. Essential for the promotion of justice and solidarity, these rights are to be respected and protected by all the institutions of society. [Peace on Earth]

Link of Love and Justice:

Love of neighbor is an absolute demand for justice, because charity must manifest itself in actions and structures, which respect human dignity, protect human rights, promote human life and facilitate human development. To promote justice is to transform structures, which block love. [Justice in the World]

Promotion of the Common Good:

The common good is the sum total of all those conditions of social living --economic, political, and cultural-- which make it possible for women and men to readily and fully achieve the perfection of their humanity. Individual rights are always experienced within the context of promotion of the common good. There is also an international common good. [Christianity and Social Progress]



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Subsidiarity:

Responsibilities and decisions should be attended to as close as possible to the level of individual initiative in local communities and institutions. Mediating structures of families, neighborhoods, community groups, small businesses and local governments should be fostered and participated in. But larger government structures do have a role when great social coordination and regulation are necessary for the common good. [The Reconstruction of the Social Order]

Political Participation:

Democratic participation in decision-making is the best way to respect the right to life, dignity and liberty of people. The government is the instrument by which people cooperate together in order to achieve the common good. The international common good requires participation in international organizations.

[Pius XII, Christmas Message, 1944]

Economic Justice:

The economy is for the people and the resources of the earth are to be shared contemporary social questions. Labor takes precedence over both capital and technology in the production process. Just wages and the right of workers to organize are to be respected. [On Human Work]

Stewardship:

All Property has a "social mortgage." People are to respect and share the resources of the earth, since we are all part of the community of creation. By our work we are co-creators in the continuing development of the earth. [On Human Work]

Global Solidarity:

We belong to one human family and as such have mutual obligations to promote the rights and development of all people across the world, irrespective of national boundaries. In particular, the right nations and the structures of the international order must reflect justice and promote life and peace. [The Development of Peoples and The Social Concerns of the Church]

Promotion of Peace:

Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among humans and among nations. The arms race must cease and progressive disarmament take place if the future is to be secure. In order to promote peace and the conditions of peace, an effective international authority is necessary. [Peace on Earth]

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