

Solidarity

“Socio-economic problems can be resolved only with the help of all the forms of solidarity: solidarity of the poor among themselves, between rich and poor, of workers among themselves, between employers and employees in a business, solidarity among nations and peoples. International solidarity is a requirement of the moral order; world peace depends in part upon this” (CCC, no. 1941).

“Various causes of a religious, political, economic, and financial nature today give ‘the social question a worldwide dimension.’ There must be solidarity among nations which are already politically interdependent. It is even more essential when it is a question of dismantling the perverse mechanisms that impede the development of the less advanced countries. In place of abusive if not usurious financial systems, iniquitous commercial relations among nations, and the arms race, there must be substituted a common effort to mobilize resources toward objectives of moral, cultural, and economic development, ‘redefining the properties and hierarchies of values’”. (CCC, no. 2438).

PRAYER FOR SOLIDARITY: Almighty and ever-living God, empower your one human family to join hands on our journey of faith. Send us your Spirit of hope, so that we may work to alleviate human suffering and foster charity and justice in our world. AMEN.

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United States Catholic Conference

Being Neighbor: The Catechism and Social Justice

Catholic Campaign for Human Development



Sidebar Heading

- Synopsis of Principles of Catholic Social Teaching
- Dignity of the Human Person
- Community and the Common Good
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Option for the Poor
- Dignity of Work
- Solidarity

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Introduction

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a sure and authentic compendium of the Church's teaching. It provides a means to help Catholics deepen their understanding of the faith. As Catholics, we believe that our faith is meant to make a difference in the communities, societies, and world in which we live. We can start making that difference by following Christ's call to be neighbor. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides us with some of the steps to begin:

Those who with God's help have welcomed Christ's call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world. This treasure, received from the apostles, has been faithfully guarded by their successors. All Christ's faithful are called to hand it on from generation to generation, by professing the faith, by living it in fraternal sharing, and by celebrating it in liturgy and prayer. (6) (*Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], no. 3*)

Being Neighbor: The Catechism and Social Justice is intended as a prayer resource to highlight some of the social justice teachings of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in the context of Catholic social teaching. *Being Neighbor* can be used in individual prayer, in a small-faith sharing group, or in a liturgical context with an emphasis on the social mission of the Church.

May we always keep focused on our Lord Jesus Christ's mission: Love God and love your neighbor. By loving our neighbor, we grow deeper in our love for God.

6: Cf. Acts 2:42

Option for the Poor

PRAYER FOR THE POOR: God of Justice, open our eyes to see you in the face of the poor. Open our ears to hear you in the cries of the exploited. Open our mouths to defend you in the public squares as well as in private deeds. Remind us that what we do to the least ones, we do to you. AMEN.

Dignity of Work

"In work, the person exercises and fulfills in part the potential inscribed in his nature. The primordial value of labor stems from man himself, its author and its beneficiary. Work is for man, not man for work. (213)

Everyone should be able to draw from work the means of providing for his life and that of his family, and of serving the human community" (CCC, no. 2428)

"Access to employment and to professions must be open to all without unjust discrimination: men and women, healthy and disabled, natives and immigrants. (218) For its part society should, according to circumstances, help citizens find work and employment" (CCC, no. 2433).

PRAYER FOR WORK: Creator God, thank you for providing us with the gift to share our talents. Provide our community, our nation, our world the fortitude to provide work for all which is decent and fair. Make us faithful stewards of your creation to enhance the human dignity of our global family. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit now and forever. AMEN.

234: *Centesimus annus* 57; cf. Lk6:20-22, Mt8:20; Mk12:41-44

235: *Eph* 4:28

238: St. John Chrysostom, Hom. in Lazaro 2, 5:J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca* (Paris, 1857-1866), 48, 992.

239: *Apostolicam actuositatem* 8:5

240: St. Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*, 3, 21: J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca* (Paris, 1841-1855), 77, 87

213 & 218: Cf. *Laborem exercens* 6, 19:22-23

Rights & Responsibilities

“Man is himself the author, center, and goal of all economic and social life. The decisive point of the social question is that goods created by God for everyone should in fact reach everyone in accordance with justice and with the help of charity” (CCC, no. 2459)

“True development concerns the whole man. It is concerned with increasing each person’s ability to respond to his vocation and hence to God’s call (cf. CA 29)” (CCC, no. 2461)

PRAYER FOR BASIC RIGHTS: Lord of Wisdom, awaken us to our duty to care for the basic needs of all people. Strengthen with hope people denied their human rights and freedoms. Provide us all with the voice to cry out for justice for the poor and the oppressed. AMEN.

Option for the Poor

“The Church’s love for the poor...is a part of her constant tradition.’ This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor. (234) Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to ‘be able to give to those in need’ (235)” (CCC, no. 2444)

“...’Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs’ (238)” ‘The demands of injustice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity’. (239)

When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.” (240) (CCC, no. 2446)

Synopsis of Principles of CST

These principles may be summarized as follows:

DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

All people are a reflection of the image of God and thus all human life, at all stages from conception through death, is sacred. The basic dignity that each person possesses comes from God; therefore all discrimination is wrong. People take precedence over things and structures. Systems are meant to serve people, not vice versa.

COMMUNITY AND THE COMMON GOOD

The mystery of the trinity involves the relationship of complete love among the three divine person—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in one God. As people made in God’s image, we must model divine love. Hence the human person is both sacred and fundamentally social. In community we realize the fulfillment of our dignity and rights in relationship with and to others.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

People have basic rights and responsibilities because of their human dignity that reflects the fact that they have been created in God’s image. Catholic teaching emphasizes that people have a right to life and to the basic necessities that provide quality to life: food, shelter, health care, education, and employment. We are called to respect the rights of others and to seek the common good.

OPTION FOR THE POOR

The Gospel calls Christians to put the needs of the poor first. A common moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable people. Wherever there is structural injustice, Christians are called to oppose it. Those with the greatest need especially require the greatest response.

Synopsis of Principles of CST

DIGNITY OF WORK

Work is an expression of our dignity and of our involvement in God's creation. People have a right to decent work, fair wages, and private property. The economy exists to serve people, not vice versa.

SOLIDARITY

We are all one human family in the world. Because we realize our dignity, rights, and responsibilities, in relationship with others, we need to continue to build a community that empowers people to attain their full human potential. By working for justice, we fulfill our mandate to build the Body of Christ.

Dignity of the Human Person

“Created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls, all...have the same nature and the same origin. Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy an equal dignity” (CCC, no. 1934)

“Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of...existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person—among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life” (71) (CCC, no. 2270)

PRAYER FOR LIFE: Eternal God, creator and sustainer of life, bless us with the courage to defend all life from conception to natural death. Bless us with the strength to respect all peoples from east to west, from north to south, so that we may truly follow the call of Jesus to be neighbor. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit.
AMEN.

71: Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum vitae I, 1.*

Community & the Common Good

“...The common good requires the social well-being and development of the group itself. Development is the epitome of all social duties. Certainly it is the proper function of authority to arbitrate, in the name of the common good, between various particular interests; but it should make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on” (28) (CCC, no. 1908)

“The Church makes a moral judgment about economic and social matters, ‘when the fundamental rights of the person or the salvation of souls require it.’ (199) In the moral order she bears a mission distinct from that of political authorities: the Church is concerned with the temporal aspects of the common good because they are ordered to the sovereign God, our ultimate end. She strives to inspire right attitudes with respect to earthly goods and in socio-economic relationships.” (CCC, no. 2420)

PRAYER FOR LIFE: Embracing Father, You grace each of us with equal measure in your love. Let us learn to love our neighbors more deeply, so that we can create peaceful and just communities. Inspire us to use our creative energies to build the structures we need to overcome the obstacles of intolerance and indifference. May Jesus provide us the example needed and send the Spirit to warm our hearts for the journey.
AMEN.

28: Cf. *Gaudium et spes* 26:2
199: *Gaudium et spes* 76:5