

Principles of Catholic Social Teaching:



All Justice is rooted in the dignity of the human person. Our dignity comes from God and not from human accomplishments or attributes!

1. Dignity of the Human Person	2. Common Good and Community	3. Option for the Poor	4. Rights and Responsibilities
<p>At the core of all Catholic moral and social teaching is the development and understanding of a healthy anthropology rooted in scripture and Catholic faith teaching. The inherent dignity of the human person which comes from God and the right to have that dignity respected from conception to natural death is core to the Gospel. Human life is sacred, for each person is made in the image of God. This principle is the starting point for a moral vision for society.</p>	<p>The common good comprises of "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more easily" (CCC 1906). The goods of the world are for all and these gifts are to be shared rather than possessed. While there are benefits to private ownership, Private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute and unconditional right. No one is justified in keeping for their exclusive use what they do not need, when others lack necessities (cf. <i>Populorum Progressio</i>, no. 23). Each of us has a responsibility to contribute the common good. (Cf. CCC 1924-25)</p>	<p>How do we treat those members of our society that are most vulnerable – people who are poor, weak, marginalized, the sick? Jesus invites us to follow his example – to stand on the side of the poor. This option for the poor is so essential that we often refer to it as the ‘fundamental’ and ‘preferential’ option for the poor. When expressed in a healthy manner this option affects all our words and actions so that they favour the poor.</p> <p>When we practice this option for the poor we acknowledge that the dignity of all, especially those affected by poverty, must be promoted. At the same time, we are saying that we are all brothers and sisters and we are ‘our brothers and sisters keepers’!</p> <p>Poverty not only hurts its victims but also the whole community.</p>	<p>There is a reciprocal relationship between rights and responsibilities; each right has corresponding responsibilities. Human rights must be guaranteed if human dignity is going to be promoted and protected. The right to life and a right to those things required for human decency (i.e. basic needs just employment) are fundamental to the welfare of each person and thus to the health of the community.</p> <p>This principle teaches us that we are to both serve and be served by the institutions of the world and that we are responsible for each other.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catechism 1701-1706; 1929-1933 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catechism 1878-1882; 1905-1912 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catechism 2443-2349 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catechism 1913-1917

<p>We Believe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the Divine Image is present in each and every person • that I am truly myself, reflecting the Divine Image, when I am living and contributing to the community • that all life, from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death, has value and should be protected • that God has willed each of us for our God's own sake • that we should avoid the temptation of categorizing individuals according to the concerns in their lives • that reason and free will is an expression of the Divine Image and that each of us is called to use the gift of free will responsibly • each of us is a body-soul unity • that the voice of God can be discerned using reason and faith • that the voice of God urges each of us to do what is good and avoid evil • that we are obligated to follow this voice of God – which is heard in our conscience 	<p>We Believe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that we are called to live in community • we are called to love God, love neighbour and work for peace • that by nature we need to live in community • we develop our human potential when we serve others and through dialogue • that we are most fully alive in community – we are spiritual beings and we are also social beings • our actions, choices and words affect others • we are interdependent • promotion and protection of one's dignity can only be done while promoting and protecting all people's innate human dignity • that we are called to take care of each other and to provide for each other's needs • the common good calls us to respect each and every person • the inalienable rights of each person is to be respected by all people and public authorities • we are called to work for peace, stability and security • each group is called to develop its social well-being and the development of the group itself • as a human family, it is our responsibility to provide for the different needs of all people (food, hygiene, education, alleviating the miseries of people who have become refugees dispersed throughout the world, and assisting those who are migrants and their families) • the common good is always oriented towards the progress of persons 	<p>We Believe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that God has called us to serve the needs of those who are poor • that when we serve those who are affected by poverty, those who are marginalized, those who are lost, we serve Jesus • that when we serve those who are lost, marginalized, lost we become truly who we are called to be • that as members of the church we truly live the Gospel when we care for God's dear ones • poverty has many forms (material, religious/spiritual, social, cultural) • that our possessions belong to all people • that the demands of justice must be enjoyed by all • that we are called ensure that justice is not replaced by charity • that social action has <i>two feet</i> – charity and social action • we are called to feed the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and bury the dead • that we are called to have a love that <i>prefers</i> those who are oppressed by poverty • the goods of the earth are to serve the needs of all people 	<p>We Believe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that we have been blessed by God with innate dignity • being made in God's image we are blessed with inalienable rights; these rights are integral to our human nature • that the right to life is a right of all people from the moment of concept to natural death • that we have a right to those things required for human decency and human living (basic needs, jobs, education, etc.) • that with every right comes responsibilities • we have responsibilities to each person, to family and all of society • that we are called to both serve and be served by the institutions of the world • we are responsible for each other – we are our brother` and sisters` keeper • we are responsible for ensuring the rights of others are fulfilled
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<p>Reflection Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I understand that life begins at conception? • Do I understand that human dignity comes from God and not from human accomplishments or attributes? • Do I understand that each person has certain rights that flow from his/her dignity? • Do I understand that human rights are accompanied by responsibilities? • Do I feel called to love God and neighbour? • Through my words and actions, do I bear witness to the dignity of each person? • Do I see all people as my neighbour? • Do I see each person as 'my other self'? • Do I guard myself from prejudices, selfishness, greed and pride? • Do I understand, that God has given me the ability to respond (responsibility) in love? • How do I form and inform my conscience? • Do I promote a culture of life? 	<p>Reflection Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I see myself as an important, contributing member of different communities (family, church, school, work, neighbourhood, etc.)? • Who is my neighbour? • Do I respect others? • How might I move beyond indifference to concern for others? • Do I think of my words, actions, and attitudes affect others? • Do I invite others to share their gifts? • Do I put people first? • How do I address the needs of others? • How do I respect the dignity of others while respecting the dignity of my own God given dignity? • Do I see the value and the limits of private ownership? Do I understand that private property is not an absolute and unconditional right? • How do I contribute to the common good? • Do I promote peace and social development? 	<p>Reflection Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I ensure that I am ready to serve those who are poor? • How do I, and the communities I belong to, participate in the corporal works of mercy (feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead)? • <i>"You shall not steal"</i> – This commandment asks me to be a person of justice and charity. How do my habits prohibit or encourage me to be a person of justice? • Do I see that the fruits of the earth and the fruits of our labour are to be enjoyed by all? • Do my shopping habits consider practices of fair trade, the rights of the workers, fair wages, etc.? • Do I respond in great love to those who are poor, marginalized and/or lost? • Do I prefer to respond the needs of those who are poor? • Are my/our habits, attitudes, policies, and procedures addressing the needs of those who are poor? • Can I identify those who are poor, lost, marginalized? 	<p>Reflection Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I ready to stand up for the rights of all people? • Can I distinguish between rights and desires? • Who am I responsible for? • Am I taking care of myself and others? • When I think of my rights, am I ready to name my responsibilities? • Is my <i>ability to respond</i> (responsibility) informed and formed by love, faith, and hope? • Do I understand that each person has the right to life and to decent human living (, to food, clothing, health care, education and employment, etc.)? • With which institutions am I involved? • What are practical and theoretical mission statements of the institutions to which I belong? • What responsibilities do I have to my neighbour, my family, to self, to work, to God? • Do I exercise my rights and responsibilities to the society (e.g. promoting healthy communities, voting)?
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5. The Principle of Subsidiarity	6. Economic Justice	7. Stewardship of God's Creation	8. Global Solidarity and Development
<p>According to the principle of <i>subsidiarity</i>, "a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good" (CCC 1883). Upholding the principle of subsidiarity is necessary for promoting human dignity, protecting human rights, and building up the common good. This principle respects the fact that all people have the right and the responsibility to participate in all in the decision making and work of higher (political) institutions.</p> <p>In short, all societies of a superior order must adopt attitudes of help (<i>subsidium</i>) — therefore of support, promotion, development — with respect to lower-order societies. At the same time, this principle sets limits on state intervention (cf. Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, #186).</p>	<p>People before profits! The economy must serve people – the Catholic Church promotes a ‘people first’ economic statement. In keeping with economic justice is a healthy theology of work. The Church teaches that all workers have a right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, and to safe working conditions. Workers also have a fundamental right to organize and join unions.</p> <p>Since we live in community private property and amassing of excessive wealth has limits: “No one is allowed to amass excessive wealth when others lack the basic necessities of life”.</p>	<p>We are called to be stewards of all of God’s creation. We are called to take care of all that God has created and to ensure that these goods are at the disposal of all people. Stewardship is our thank-filled response to God’s generosity.</p> <p>At the same time we are called to become co-creators who use our God given gifts for to ensure that each person’s needs are addressed while we build the ‘Kingdom of God’ here on earth.</p>	<p>We are all neighbours, interdependent and interconnected. The principle of solidarity encourages us to remove the obstacles that separate us and promote our common humanity. St. Paul tells us that when we are united to Christ, we remove any and every thing that divides us: “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3. 27-28). We are one human family and called to be our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers (Gen. 4. 9). True development occurs when we journey together, taking care of each other, responding to each others’ needs – when the division between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ no longer exist.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catechism 1883-1885 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catechism 2426-36 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catechism 337-349 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catechism 1939-1942

<p>We Believe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we are social beings who need to live & work together as brothers & sisters • through service & dialogue we respond to our vocation & develop our potential • the human person is the subject and end of all social institutions • we are meant to work together to improve the self, each other & society • each person performs for one self what he/she is capable of doing; It is wrong to take from a person and give to the community, what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry • to protect basic justice, government should undertake only those initiatives which exceed the capacities of private groups or individuals acting independently; governments should not replace or destroy smaller communities and individual initiative • by its nature every social activity should serve the members of the body; it should never destroy and/or absorb them • good government intervention (urging, restraining, regulating economic activity as necessary) truly helps other social groups contribute to the common good • when basic needs cannot adequately be met at the lower level, then it is necessary & imperative that higher levels of government intervene • people have a right & responsibility to participate in political institutions so that governments can work for the common good 	<p>We Believe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic decisions, activity & growth are meant to provide for the needs of all • Moral and Social Justice principles should help shape economic decisions & activity • human dignity of all should be upheld in all economic decisions & activity • created in God's image, we reflect this image in human work; when work is done by a person, it has value • work should respect the dignity of the human person; work is for the human person, not the human person for work • work is an opportunity to be co-creators: we are called to use our God-given gifts to continue God's plan for all creation • work can have a redemptive and sanctifying quality when we unite the hardships of work with Jesus • through work, we can exercise our gifts and fulfill our potential • we have the right to meaningful employment, a fair living wage (enabling all to live in a dignified lifestyle providing for the self and family, & to serve others) • government has a responsibility to create climate for job security and worker safety • God calls us to work and to rest • workers have the right to form unions or associations & to strike when it cannot be avoided • organizations and all leaders are responsible to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations 	<p>We Believe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God created all things – God creates with love, beauty, purpose and order • the goods of the earth are created for all us and we are called to ensure the fair distribution of these goods • all things, in a unique way, possesses its own particular goodness and perfection • all creation reflects God's infinite goodness & wisdom • all creation is interconnected and interdependent • respecting the goodness of God and God's plan, we must carefully interact with all creation so as not to bring harm to others or to the environment: no creature is self-sufficient • humans are the summit of the Creator's work • using reason we can discern God's plan for creation 	<p>We Believe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we have a social nature and all are brothers & sisters • solidarity calls us to live in love & friendship as companions • solidarity demands the just distribution of all earth goods • in fair remuneration for work • we should seek peace; conflicts & tensions should be resolved in fair negotiations • we are all equal; we should work to eliminate all that divides us • as members of the body, we all have an important role to play • we need to develop a '<i>people first</i>' understanding; all development should have a <i>people first</i> attitude • equality of all concerns their dignity as human persons; our rights flow from that dignity • differences between people are part of God's plan and these differences allow us to need one another; differences call forth a response of love • solidarity means we eliminate all sinful inequalities • solidarity calls us to share spiritual and material goods • when we socialize and work together we develop our skills (e.g. initiative, responsibility)
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Reflection Questions	Reflection Questions	Reflection Questions	Reflection Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I keep my relationships in good order? • Do I search for truth or do I need to win all debates? • Do I pray for those in positions of responsibility? • Do I make the effort participate in the in political institutions? • Do I vote? • Do I encourage others through my word and actions to do their best? • Do I assist those in need or am I tempted to take over? • Do I love my neighbour? • Do I love God? • Do I work for the betterment of others, self and society? • Do I use my gifts wisely? • Do I develop my potential? • Do I try to know God's will? • How am I affected by individualism and competition? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I approach my work as simply a means to making a living? • Do I see work is more than a way to make a living? • Do I see my work as a participation in God's act of creation? • How do I treat other people who work? • How do my shopping habits support fair wages and safe conditions for those who work? • Do I support 'sweatshops' or am I socially-aware shopper? • Do I show gratitude towards others (saying 'thank you')? • Do I use my money wisely? • Do I steal? • How am I affected by materialism and consumerism? • Do I use my gifts in a way that is pleasing to God? • How do I discern my vocation? • Do I rest in a way that reflects my dignity and the dignity of others? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I recycle? • Am I aware of what I consume of what I waste? • How do I take care of the resources entrusted to this generation? • Do I keep my relationship with others and the earth in good order? • Do I understand what it means to be a steward entrusted with caring for the earth? • Am I grateful for all of God's creation? • Do I share? • Do I work and pray to know God's plan for creation? • Do I see how all my relationships – with God, others, the earth, and self – are interconnected? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I love others? • Who is my neighbour? • Do I treat others as my equal? • Do I take on an attitude of servant leadership? • How do I provide for the needs of others? • Do I use violent words or actions? • Do I understand that I am a member of the human family? • Do I have prejudices and biases based on national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences? • Do I work for peace and the development of others? • Do I act as my brother's and sister's keeper? • Do I over-consume? • Do I use people first language? • Do I recognize the gifts of others? • Do I see differences as gifts from God? • Do I understand that I am responsible for the use of my gifts? • Do I share?

Further Reading:

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Revised in Accordance with the Official Latin Text Promulgated by Pope John Paul II. 2nd ed. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997. (also found at: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM)

Pennock, Michael. *Catholic Social Teaching: Learning and Living Justice.* Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2000.

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Ryan, Michael. *The Social Attitudes of a Catholic.* Woodilee, Ontario: Solidarity Books, 2005.