

# **Catholic Social Teaching**

## **A Key to Catholic Identity**

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# The Problem

Far too many Catholics are unfamiliar with the basic content of Catholic social teaching. More fundamentally, many Catholics do not adequately understand that the social mission of the Church is an essential part of Catholic faith.

This poses a serious challenge for all Catholics, since it weakens our capacity to be a Church that is true to the demands of the Gospel. We need to do more to share the social mission and message of our Church.

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*

U.S. Bishops, 1998

# A Key to Catholic Identity

The central message is simple: our faith is profoundly social. We cannot be called truly “Catholic” unless we hear and heed the Church's call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace.

*Communities of Salt and Light, U.S. Bishops, 1993*

# Vatican II's Ecclesiology

- ❖ The Church is a sign and a safeguard of the dignity of the human person.
- ❖ A religious organization whose purpose it is to help bring about the reign of God in history.
- ❖ The social mission is “constitutive” not extra-curricular or optional.

## Justice in the World, 1971 Synod

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.

# Constitutive Elements of Church

- ❖ **Scripture** -- hearing the Good News
- ❖ **Sacraments** -- worship, prayer life, etc.
- ❖ **Social Mission** -- action for social justice

# Catholic Social Teaching

- ❖ Rooted in the Bible
- ❖ Continually developed in Catholic Social Teaching
  - Observe, judge, act

# Biblical themes of justice

- ❖ God is active in human history
- ❖ Creation
- ❖ Covenant relationship
- ❖ Community
- ❖ Anawim -- "the widows, orphans and aliens"
- ❖ The example of Jesus – reign of God, healing

*In biblical faith, the doing of justice  
is the primary expectation of Yahweh.*

Walter Brueggeman



# Cycle of Baal



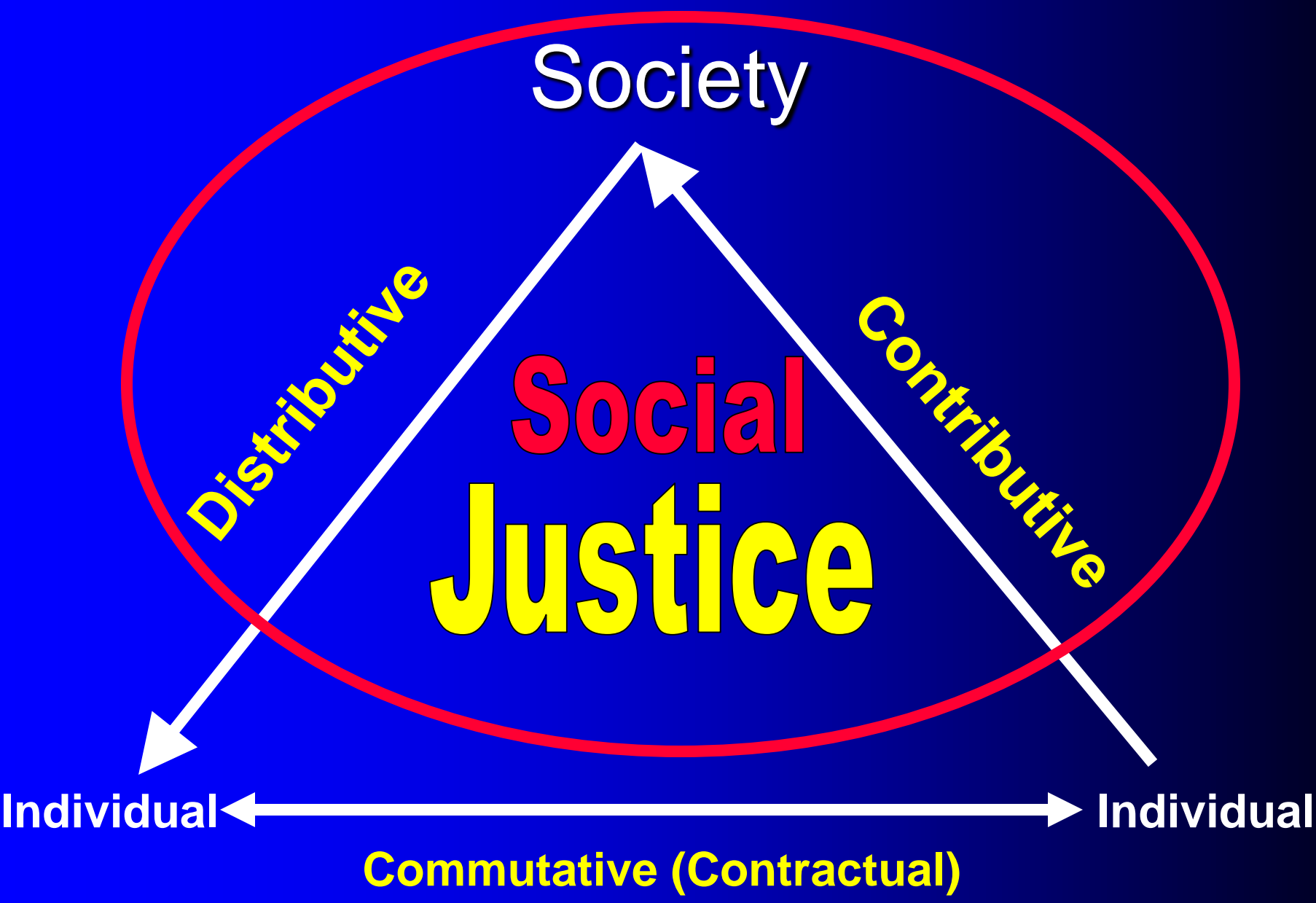
## Vatican II

This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age.

Long since, the Prophets of the Old Testament fought vehemently against this scandal and even more so did Jesus Christ Himself in the New Testament threaten it with grave punishments.

# Modern Catholic Social Teaching

1891	Rerum Novarum	Leo XIII
1931	Quadragesimo Anno	Pius XI
1961	Mother and Teacher	John XXIII
1963	Peace on Earth	John XXIII
1965	Church in the Modern World	Vatican II
1967	The Development of Peoples	Paul VI
1971	A Call to Action	Paul VI
1971	Justice in the World	Synod of Bishops
1979	Redeemer of Humanity	John Paul II
1981	On Human Work	John Paul II
1988	On Social Concern	John Paul II
1991	The One Hundredth Year	John Paul II
1995	The Gospel of Life	John Paul II



Society

Distributive

Contributive

Social  
Justice

Individual

Individual

Commutative (Contractual)

# Major Themes from Catholic Social Teaching

1. Human dignity
2. Community
3. Rights and duties
4. Option for the poor
5. Participation
6. Economic Justice
7. Stewardship of Creation
8. Solidarity
9. Role of Government
10. Promotion of Peace

# 1. Human dignity

The person is sacred, made in the image of God.

## 2. Community / Common Good

### The social nature of the human person

The fact that human beings are social by nature indicates that the betterment of the person and the improvement of society depend on each other....humanity by its very nature stands completely in need of life in society.

Vatican II, *The Church in the Modern World*

*“Every man for himself,” said the elephant as he danced among the chickens.*

Charles Dickens

# 3. Rights and duties

- ❖ Civil/political
- ❖ Economic/social

Every person has a right to the basic material necessities that are required to live a decent life.



## 4. Option for the Poor

- ❖ Remember the “widows, orphans, and aliens.”
- ❖ A necessary element of the common good

# 5. Participation

All people have a right to a minimum level of participation in the economic, political, and cultural life of society.

## 6. Economic Justice

- ❖ The economy must serve people, not the other way around. People are more important than things; labor is more important than capital.
- ❖ All workers have a right to productive work, to decent wages, to safe working conditions; and they have a right to organize and join unions.
- ❖ People have a right to economic initiative and private property, but these rights have limits. No one is allowed to amass excessive wealth when others lack the basic necessities of life.

# 7. Stewardship of Creation

The goods of the earth are gifts.  
We hold them in trust, as stewards.

“God destined the earth and all it contains for all people and nations so that all created things would be shared fairly by all humankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity.”

*On the Development of Peoples*

## 8. The Virtue of Solidarity

“It is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all ...because we are all really responsible for all.”

Pope John Paul II, *On Social Concern*, 1987

# 9. Role of Government

- ❖ The state has a positive moral function.  
It is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good
- ❖ Subsidiarity
  - ❖ As small as possible
  - ❖ As big as necessary

# 10. Promotion of Peace

- Peace is not just the absence of war
- “If you want peace, work for justice.”

Pope Paul VI, 1972, World Day of Peace Message

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# Implications for Catholic Educators

Catholic schools, religious education and faith formation programs are vitally important for sharing the substance and values of the Catholic social justice heritage.

Just as the social teaching of the Church is integral to Catholic faith, the social justice dimensions of teaching are integral to Catholic education and catechesis. They are an essential part of Catholic identity and formation.

# “Seven Commandments” for Integrating Catholic Social Teaching into Our Faith

1. Rooted in prayer and worship.
2. Integrate, don't isolate.
3. Content counts – study the documents.
4. Competency really counts.
5. Charity (social service) is not enough.
6. Thou shalt observe, judge, act.
7. Thou shalt have fun!

# Make sure the teaching is rooted in prayer and worship.

Cultivate a spirituality that is not just private,  
but also public and social.

*Catholicism does not call us to abandon  
the world, but to help shape it.*

*This does not mean leaving worldly tasks and  
responsibilities, but transforming them.*

*Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice*  
U.S. Bishops, November, 1998

# Integrate, don't isolate

The commitment to human life and dignity, to human rights and solidarity is a calling every Catholic must share. It is not a vocation for a few, but a challenge for every Catholic educator.

The values of the Church's social teaching must not be treated as tangential or optional. They must be a core part of teaching and formation.

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*, U.S. Bishops, 1998

# Content counts

Study the documents.

There is a universal need to be more explicit in teaching the principles of Catholic social thought and helping people apply and act on those principles.

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*

U.S. Bishops, 1998

# Competency really counts

We strongly urge Catholic to create additional resources and programs that will address the lack of familiarity with Catholic social teaching among many....

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*  
U.S. Bishops, 1998

# Charity (social service) is not enough.

There is a need for Catholic educational and catechetical programs not only to continue offering direct service experiences, but also to offer opportunities to work for change in the policies and structures that cause injustice.

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*  
U.S. Bishops, 1998

# Thou shalt observe, judge, act

- **Observe** the facts; know the reality
- Use social analysis and moral values to make **judgments** about the facts
- Plan a realistic and effective strategy for **action**





Thou shalt have fun

No one likes a grim do-gooder!

# Conclusion

Salt and Light for the World

*“You’re supposed to be the leaven in the loaf, not part of the lump.”*

# Internet Resources on Catholic Social Teaching

- ❖ <http://www.osjspm.org/cst>
- ❖ <http://www.osjspm.org/justed.htm>
- ❖ <http://www.mcgill.pvt.k12.al.us/jerryd/cm/cst.htm>

**This PowerPoint presentation can be  
downloaded at the following web address:**

<http://www.osjspm.org/cst.htm>

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# Separation of Church and State

