

WHAT IS CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING?

Catholic social teaching is a body of thought or doctrine on social issues that has been developed by the Church over the past hundred years. It reflects the Gospel values of love, peace, justice, compassion, reconciliation, service and community in the context of modern social problems. Catholic social teaching is continually developed through observation, analysis and action, and is there to guide us in the responses we make to the social problems of our ever-changing world. There are ten principles which identify the areas of focus and these can be used to guide our actions.

TEN PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Human Dignity

Every single person is created in the image of God. Therefore they are invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. The dignity of the person grants them inalienable rights – political, legal, social, and economic rights. This is the most important principle because it is from our dignity as human persons that all other rights and responsibilities flow.

Human Equality

Equality of all people comes from their inherent human dignity. Differences in talents are part of God's plan, but social, cultural, and economic discrimination is not.

Respect for Human Life

All people, through every stage of life, have inherent dignity and a right to life that is consistent with that dignity. Human life at every stage is precious and therefore worthy of protection and respect.

The Principle of Association

The human person is not only sacred but also social. The way we organise society directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to develop. People achieve fulfillment by association with others – in families and other social institutions. As the centerpiece of society, the family must be protected, and its stability never undermined.

The Principle of Participation

People have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the well being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. Everyone has the right not to be shut out from participating in those institutions necessary for human fulfilment, such as work, education, and political participation.

The Principle of the Common Good

Individual rights are always experienced within the context of promotion of the common good. The common good is about respecting the rights and responsibilities of all people. The individual does not have unfettered rights at the expense of others, but nor are individual rights to be subordinated to the needs of the group.

The Principle of Solidarity

We are one human family. Our responsibilities to each other transcend national, racial, economic and ideological differences. We are called to work globally for justice. The principle of solidarity requires of us that we not concern ourselves solely with our own individual lives. We need to be aware of what is going on in the world around us.

Preferential Protection for the Poor and Vulnerable

Our Catholic tradition instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. The good of society as a whole requires it. It is especially important we look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor.

The Principle of Stewardship

We have a responsibility to care for the gifts God has given us. This includes the environment, our personal talents and other resources.

The Universal Destination of Goods

The earth and all it produces is intended for every person. Private ownership is acceptable, but there is also a responsibility to ensure all have enough to live in dignity. If we have more than we need, there is a social mortgage to pay to ensure others do not go without.

The Principle of Subsidiarity

No higher level of organisation (such as government) should perform any function that can best be handled at a lower level (such as families and local communities) by those who are closer to the issues or problems.

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TEN CATHOLIC BELIEFS ABOUT PEOPLE AND THEIR LIVES WRITTEN FOR CHILDREN

Valuing all People's Dignity

Every single person is created in the image of God therefore God knows each person's name and they are valuable to God. Because they are God's creatures, whether they are men or women, boys or girls, old or young, of any race or religion, rich or poor, healthy or sick, or differently-abled, people have a special dignity or value and they are worthy of respect as a member of the human family. This is a very important belief Catholic people have.

Treating People Equally and Fairly

God created all people equal and in God's eyes all people have dignity and value regardless of their colour, their culture, what they own, what they can do, where they live, God wants them to be treated equally and fairly.

Respecting All People

All people, through every stage of life, have dignity and value and a right to life that respects that dignity. Human life at every stage whether young or old is precious and therefore worthy of protection and respect.

Valuing the Family and the Community

The human person is holy because they were created by God. God created people to live in a family and with their help and the support of other members of the community each person can grow to be the best they can be. This is part of God's plan for people and that is why the family is so important. The way we organise society must respect and support families so they can live happy, fruitful lives.

Taking Part in the Community

People have a right and a duty to take part in society and to work together so everyone can be happy especially people who are poor and vulnerable. Everyone has the right to be included in all areas of society especially in activities and groups that help people to develop their talents and care for their needs.

Working for the Good of Everyone

People need to work for their own good and the good of everyone else. The rights and responsibilities of all people need to be respected. No group's needs are more important than others, so people need to work for the common good which means making life good for everyone.

Caring for the Whole Human Family

People are one big human family therefore we need to help each other regardless of our race, our religion or place in the world. Being part of the human family means we work to make the world a place where all people can live peaceful, happy, productive lives. This means we need to know what's going on in the world and to work for justice everywhere.

Helping to Protect the Poor and Vulnerable

People need to find ways to help those who are poor and in danger or are sick and frightened.

Respecting and Caring for the Earth

We are not owners but managers of the land we live on. We have a responsibility to respect and care for it and all the gifts God has given us including the environment, our personal talents and other resources. It is our responsibility to share the resources of the earth so that all people can live with dignity and not go without what they need for a good life.

Being Responsible for Ourselves

People have the right to make decisions about their own lives. Those whose lives are closely affected by decisions should be involved in making the decisions.

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